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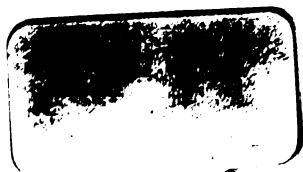
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AGAINST WIND AND TIDE.

BY HOLME LEE,
AUTHOR OF "SYLVAN HOLT'S DAUGHTER," "KATHIE BRANDE."
ETC. ETC.

"Are these things then necessities?
Then let us meet them like necessities."
SHAKESPEARE.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

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PART THIRD.



Storm Winds.

“ THEN in life's goblet freely press
The leaves that give it bitterness,
Nor prize the coloured waters less,
For in thy darkness and distress
New light and strength they give!

“ And he who has not learned to know
How false its sparkling bubbles show,
How bitter are the drops of woe
With which its brim may overflow,
He has not learned to live.”

LONGFELLOW.

AGAINST WIND AND TIDE.

CHAPTER THE FIRST.

HOME.

"THE cares that infest the day
Fold their tents, like the Arabs,
And silently steal away."
LONGFELLOW.

I.

THERE was not a happier household in all Walton Minster than that of Robert Hawthorne and his dear wife; it was happy and quiet enough to give some reason to that old saw which often has but very little,—“Marriages are made in heaven.”

The childlike simplicity of Lilian's character remained still the same attaching power as

formerly. It prevailed with every one alike. She was always to be *loved* above everything. It never occurred to any person to say that they looked up to her, or respected her, or esteemed her, but her name would be accompanied by some endearing word which had the meaning of a caress. To Robert she was the sunshine and pleasantness of life, the sweet and sufficient complement of his own grave and quiet disposition: even her little petulances and feigned perversities were only trifles to be coaxed away with kisses; clouds light as air, which were a beauty and caprice like the fleecy vapours running across a summer sky. Yet I would not have it thought that she was weak or trivial; sound brain, pure mind, loving heart, gentle spirit, guided and pervaded her life. She had drawn a good lot, a very happy lot, and her maturity was as the mature perfection of some sweet-scented flower, such as all delight to admire, to set in their garden, or to wear in the bosom. There may be a more magnificent grace in the fine scarlet camelia, a wilder charm in the passion-flower flinging its tendrils on the burning air, a more

pungent attraction in the thorny briar even, for some imaginations (I mean in the types of womanhood answering to these emblems); but the modest loveliness, the tender perfume, the simple purity of the white lily amongst its veiling leaves will win the more constant and grateful devotion. Robert Hawthorne's Lilian was this lily.

In their home there were the means and the taste for all essential refinements; not wealth, but competence; not learning, but fancies and preferences for certain books and certain authors which, in the long winter evenings, Robert read aloud while Lilian sewed; and if the last half-hour of this reading was accomplished with Lilian perched on Robert's knee, her arm round his neck, and her soft cheek very close to his, I don't think either book or author lost by the arrangement.

"I like a song that sings in my ears all the day after I have heard it," Lilian would say; and though Robert, for his part, preferred a solid, even a dull book, he continually found and brought home from the bookseller in the Market-place a little volume of verse or a story-book,

in which the ever-new old parables of human love and human sorrow were recounted again and again with a difference only in the setting. Robert was rather inclined on principle to disapprove of these fictitious histories, but Lilian had a genuine delight in them. Women, like children, without being either ignorant or silly, mostly love a tale. Furnish them with a bulky history, a philosophical treatise, and in eight cases out of ten the present result to their minds will be a fog of words, words, words, and the after effect a confused hum of bewildering dullness. But a tale in which they listen to their own thoughts made vocal; where they see love, and patience, and sorrow striving in the battlefield of life; where they see men, women, and little children acting and failing, hoping, fearing, and weeping as the world does around them,—is a lesson and an encouragement as well as a pleasure. They can forgive, nay they can *relish*, a prolix minuteness of detail, they can be blind to defects of style and occasional grammatical lapses, for the sake of the pretty fable that sounds so real and sings in their hearts through the long

household hours when their men-folk are away in the office or the workshop or where not.

Lilian was a discriminating little critic amongst her favourites. She never perversely blamed a story for not being something else, but took it for what it was with more or less approval. Sometimes, when unusually charmed with a tale, she would carry it to Dorothea Sancton to read, and be quite disappointed to find her of a totally different opinion. There are diverse complexions of readers as well as of writers, and perhaps no book was ever yet put forth so feeble or so inane but that it found some one to like it. Neither have story-books all the folly to themselves, as the supercilious critical contempt that is expended on them might lead the unobservant to suppose. Are there no pretentious philosophical works which have become as very sloughs of despond to those who adventured themselves therein? no soporific histories dulling men's wits? no partizan histories misleading men's judgment? no wooden lay-figure biographies without a breath of informing spirit? no tours of travellers travelling in the leading-strings of guide-books? no

lumbering theologians who lose sight of God in a storm of controversy where cross-winds of doctrine and the thick haze of misty self-delusion are enough to confound the elect themselves? I think there are all these; mere puzzle-brains and shelf-cumberers, neither wiser, wittier, nor worthier than the weak little wild-flower stories whose life is of a day, and who die willingly when their brief task of embellishment is over.

Have you read Mrs. Inchbald's "Simple Story?" Its style may sound rather old-fashioned now, but there is the touch of nature in it that made Lilian laugh and cry over its pages, and remember Matilda and Doriforth ever after as distinctly as if she had known them in the flesh. She made personal friends in the tales she read; and often, sitting alone when Robert was attending to his business, she would weave new adventures for them; carry the lovers, who were happily married in the last chapter, through the deep cares of later life; give them children, give them sorrows, give them losses, trials of love and trials of endurance, all tending to good issues; for Lilian's favourite heroes and heroines were all

noble, self-denying, loving and beloved; almost too pure and excellent for a world in whose finest gold there is always a measure of alloy.

In this perpetual working of her fancy there lurked, perhaps, an unconscious effort to fill the mourning chamber of her heart. Over the luxuriant beauty of her womanhood lay a gentle shadow, which betrayed that the flower had suffered in the blossoming; a little child had lived and died in her tender arms; a little voice had left an echo in her soul, that was never silent. When Robert was absent, she liked mostly to sit in a room upstairs, from the window of which, over the roofs of the houses, she could see the country fields and hills, and the merry Gled shining amongst them far away. In this room there was an empty cradle standing by the wall, a dusty rocking-chair turned away from the fire-side, a hundred pathetic evidences of the joy that had been and was not. Her memory was stored with songs which she still continued to croon softly and tenderly, even when there was no longer the little one to be lulled to sleep; tears trembled in her voice when she sat thus

alone singing to herself, but since the first great anguish was assuaged these tears were of dew rather than of rain. Robert could hear her in the office when he set his door ajar, and sometimes there floated down to him upon the melody of her voice a thought that filled his grave eyes with troubled shadows; after listening a little while, he would mount upstairs to be met with sunny smiles, that more than dispelled them, and sent him back to his desk quite cheerful and complacent. Lilian knew how it hurt Robert to see her suffer, and in his presence she had the elastic habit of always brightening up; in the early maturity of her joy and her sorrow, losing none of her freshness and none of her innocence, her soft, natural gaiety of disposition was only hushed at intervals. She had a marvellous instinct for smoothing the fold out of his brow and unsealing his lips, which Love, no doubt, taught her; indeed, that little master is the one who teaches the very finest of womanly accomplishments; the only one, in fact, who ever brings them to perfection. There was perfect accord and union between Robert and his wife,

for if she was warmth and cheer, sunshine and pleasantness, to him, he was a careful providence to her, full of all tenderness, devotion, and faithfulness, even to a point sometimes to make Lilian laugh merrily, though there were two bright tears brimming her eyes.

II.

When spring came round with long daylight evenings, and summer with scent of new hay in the meadows, the books were laid aside, and Robert took Lilian out for saunters in the fields or by the waterside, like other citizens with their wives. Peter Carlton would occasionally join them, and more often Dorothea Sancton; but always, either coming or going, they would look in at the little tea-shop in the Market-place where Dorothea was now sole mistress (old-maid Kibblewhite having finished her course a few months after Robert Hawthorne's marriage), and if she could not go they would take charge of Prim,

to give her the benefit of air and exercise instead.

Going there as usual one lovely June evening, they found Dorothea, for an habitually cheerful person, looking truly disconsolate, and on Lilian's inquiring the reason, she said, "It is market-day, and yet there has not been half a dozen customers in the shop since it was opened at eight o'clock. Everybody runs after a novelty, and the new place there" (nodding her head towards a very showy grocer's shop on the other side of the way with mock china jars in the window) "professes to undersell us all; but it is very poor stuff the people get for their money, I do believe."

"They will soon find that out and return to the old place, Dorothea," Robert said, cheerfully. "The best keep to you still, don't they?"

"Lady Nugent and Lady Leigh do, and a few like them; but Dean Mauleverer's house-keeper goes *there*" (again by a contemptuous gesture indicating the rival shop). "I have seen her myself twice enter it—once last week and once this. Well, I'm thankful poor Aunt Kibble-

white did not live to see it, for I think losing old customers like the Dean would have broken her heart. There's his name on the books as long as seven-and-twenty years ago! As for the farmers' wives they always go where they can deal a penny cheaper if what they buy is twopence worse?" It was so unusual to hear Dorothea Sancton say anything harsh or unjust that it was easy to see that the inconstancy of old customers cut her to the quick.

"Come out and have a walk with us," suggested Lilian; "it will cheer you, and make things look brighter. We are going over the fields towards Hadley Royal: here is Mistress Prim already wagging her apology for a tail in anticipation of a scamper through the deep meadow grass."

Dorothea craned her neck across the counter to get a look at her canine favourite on the other side of it, and Prim looked up at her in return with a pathetic whine.

"Nay, she thinks you are going to take her to her two puppy sons, who were launched on the world to-day, one as parish clerk's dog and the other as companion to old Miss Burr," said

she, shaking her head at the beast in a way she seemed perfectly to understand, for she sat down on the floor and vented a mournful howl. Dorothea then went to put on her bonnet and rejoined her friends soon; the three crossed the Market-place out of the town, poor Prim following with her maternal woes lying heavily on her heart. In her mind's ear she heard piteous yelps for succour issuing from chilly outhouses where her bereft offspring were tied up for terms of solitary confinement; and, as she walked, her ears and tail became limp and drooping with ineffectual sympathy.

It was a delicious evening, and the freshly cut grass was all tossed over the meadows to dry, perfuming the air with its warm scent. They did not walk far, for the heat of the day was scarcely evaporated, and the breeze in the thick green trees was almost imperceptible. Nevertheless, the scenery was lovely, and the ripple on the water by which they were strolling communicated an idea of coolness and freshness which was very pleasant to people who spent the day enclosed in the dusty and sultry town. Coming to a convenient stile near

the river with a broad elm spreading its branches above it, Lilian proposed that they should sit and rest. It was on an elevation from which, in one direction, extended Gleddale, with the Hadley woods and Eurevaux in the distance; and in the other, the town canopied by smoke and with the low Minster towers shining through, in colour only a denser vapour than the rest. The fine trees in the churchyard and the gardens on the Minster hill gave it the appearance of standing in a beautiful grove; and the little Gled, after its last flash in the sunshine, disappeared under the one-arched bridge to wind a devious way through the nests of houses and issue forth at the other side of the town and become the tributary of a larger river a few miles away amongst the hills. This stile was a very favourite resting point in Lilian's walks with Robert.

The grass was greener on the waterside, the overgrown hedgerows were more luxuriantly tangled, full of dog-roses and honeysuckle; and in their season there was wealth of lip and finger staining blackberries, which she and Lola had gathered and eaten many a time with poor long-

nosed, sad-eyed Madame Lefèvre waiting at the stile.

It was while sitting there that Dorothea Sancton, forgetting her own immediate grievances, said, "Well, Robert Hawthorne, I suppose you have heard the news?"

"No; what news?" was the simultaneous question of both her companions.

"Young Lady Nugent has a little son. Dr. Sandford dropped in and told me about half an hour before tea."

"How proud and delighted Lady Leigh will be!" exclaimed Lilian: but Robert said nothing; he was looking on the ground, and thinking of how Cyrus would feel when he heard of this new heir.

"Yes," said Dorothea; "it was a grand disappointment the first child's being a girl, but this will make up for it. There will be fine rejoicings over him as the son of Sir Philip Nugent's old age. I fancied a minute since that I heard the Hadley church bells, but what little wind there is sets the other way and carries the sound up the valley."

They all listened, however, and, softened by distance, they could indeed hear the silvery peals making merry over the event. These bells, which were celebrated for their melody throughout the country, had been brought originally from the Abbey, and must since then have rung many such epochs in and out—birth, marriage, or death of every Nugent since Hadley came into possession of that race. Robert Hawthorne would have been something more than mortal if he could have heard these tidings unmoved. Hot resentful memories such as used to torment his brother surged up turbulently in his mind and kept him silent. Lilian was silent too, thinking of the delicious happiness of the mother of a living child, and wondering, as she listened to the pealing of the bells, whether God would ever again give her that unutterable joy.

As they were returning home, Dorothea began to ask Robert if he had yet had any intelligence of his brother.

“Not a word,” replied Robert; “not a word since I saw him in London a year ago last October.”

"His behaviour is very mysterious, and un-brotherly to my thinking, but I will tell you why I asked. Miss Burr always lends me her newspaper, and in to-day's there was an account of one of those great meetings of the factory folks at Derby, and of John Dawson's address to them—I suppose it would be the same John Dawson as you heard in London?"

"Most likely; it is not probable that there are two men of the same name engaged in the same mission."

"And the newspaper went on to say that after John Dawson, a young man, a stranger, got up to speak, but the people were so excited that he could not be heard—I thought, Robert, was that young man your brother?"

"Oh, no; Cyrus has better principle and better wit," exclaimed Robert; "I could imagine him going to any length of extravagant or speculative folly, but I do not believe he would ever join himself to a cause like Dawson's, because all his prejudices of nature and education are against it."

Notwithstanding this disclaimer, the sug-

gestion had evidently disturbed Robert, however.

"But sometimes disappointments change all that," replied Dorothea: "though no one could, one would think, dream of following in Dawson's steps who was not identified heart and soul with the poor people. You must know I rather admire Dawson."

"I am not surprised—half you women are Radicals at heart, though strict Tories in practice," said Robert.

Lilian begged to know if he meant to include her, as she objected to being called names, only she liked poor people to be well off.

"Whatever we are, the responsibility of the mischief that is going on does not lie with us," added Dorothea! "and that's a comfort! John Dawson finds evils, and aggravates while trying to heal them. He will not always be able to hold these people, more's the pity; he does not understand them; and when they do break out, it will be of no use to say he meant well. I have heard Aunt Kibblewhite tell of the dreadful work there was amongst the North folk in the

war time when wages were low and food dear, and I'm sure we may pray not to have such doings repeated in our day."

"You are turning into a student of politics, Dorothea," remarked Lilian, with a rallying smile.

"Politics! my dear, don't say *politics*, say contemporary history," laughed Dorothea; "one must interest oneself in something; and now that I have to sit in the shop so many hours without anybody coming to buy my tea, I have plenty of time to read the papers and settle the affairs of the nation."

At this period of her life Dorothea began to grow almost as anecdotic in her conversation as ever old-maid Kibblewhite had been, and all the rest of the way back to the town she recalled histories of food-riots, mill-burnings, and machinery-breakings by angry mobs, which histories formed a considerable part of her inheritance from her deceased relative. The recital of these great disasters seemed to raise her spirits and dwarf her personal grievances, for when Robert and Lilian left her and Prim at their own door, she said, hopefully,

“Don’t either of you be anxious about what I told you of customers leaving me; perhaps, I have made too much of it, and it is only a temporary fluctuation of trade, which will improve when times are better. Meanwhile I must practise the science of household economy;” and she went indoors nodding and laughing in her own hearty, cheerful, natural way.

III.

Lilian Hawthorne was not strong now, she never had been strong since her baby died; and occasionally sitting in her place at Minster, Lady Leigh had observed the look of delicate languor that would come over her sweet face, and had experienced a twinge of remorse for the implacable resentment she still cherished against her for the act of disobedience committed in her marriage. When her child was born, Lilian had hoped forgiveness might be extended to her in her happiness; and when the child died she had hoped again, that it might be sent as a com-

fort in her sorrow ; but the hope failed her both times, for Lady Leigh's heart continued as hard against her as the nether millstone.

In a moment of delighted expansion over the fulfilment of her highest desires, however, the old dame determined that she would be magnanimous, and signalize the great event at Hadley Royal by pardoning the lesser folks in Maiden Lane. The gracious act was precipitated by a visit she paid to Dr. Sandford, in the course of which she astonished that elderly gentleman by a peremptory demand to know what he thought of young Mrs. Robert Hawthorne. Whatever he told her, her black [eyes were obscured, and her step more uncertain than usual as she tottered back to her carriage, and commanded herself to be driven to the entrance of Maiden Lane. Descending again there, she walked down the shady side of the street to Robert Hawthorne's door, with Sempronius following closely. Betsy, all trimmed up for the afternoon, answered the resounding knock in haste and wonderment, and was still more surprised when she saw who wanted admission. She explained that her mistress was not

well, and that she had gone to lie down and rest a little after dinner.

"Let me come in and wait until she wakes," said Lady Leigh; and the servant, having shown her into the parlour, went down to the office to tell her master who was come.

Left alone for a minute or two, she tried to collect her thoughts for what she ought to say, and asked herself, were Lilian's friends *blind*, that they did nothing? No; they were *not* blind. Already they had seen that strange expression in her beautiful eyes, as if unconsciously she were beginning to look out beyond the things of this present time to what should be hereafter. The fear and dread of it was in the heart of every one who loved her, but it had as yet found no voice to utter it.

It was a sultry day, and the Venetian blinds in the parlour were down over the open windows, through which were wafted rare breaths of air. Lady Leigh could not help looking round, after awhile, with some curiosity at the home Lilian had chosen at the penalty of her displeasure, and was surprised to see how little it differed

in all essentials from her own house upon the Minster hill. Robert had had the old-fashioned wainscoting painted and varnished beautifully like satin-wood, the furniture to correspond, and hangings, covers, and carpets of a deep rich crimson, softened now by white-muslin curtains and cushion-covers. A handsome, antique, circular mirror, with very ornate gilded frame, was over the chimney-piece, and several fine oval portraits hung upon the panels. To give more light and reflection, a large plate of looking-glass had been let into the long space between the windows, and others into the panels of a folding-door, which now standing open showed a second and smaller room beyond, fitted up in a precisely similar manner. There were plenty of old-fashioned china jars, bowls, and plates; and there was, besides, the sweet scent of pot-pourri, such as Lilian's fingers had yearly been employed to mix while she lived Lady Leigh. There was a piano, there were books new and old, there was a basket with a half-finished piece of fancy-work lying unfolded beside it; there was a writing-table, with all the pretty trifles for a lady's use:

and, gravely considering these details of comfort or taste, Lady Leigh said, half aloud,

“The child cannot be pining from any lack of luxuries she was used to. Robert Hawthorne must really have a great deal more indulgence for his wife than is common in his class, and it is precisely in these little things, which are the signs of a thoughtful love, that the subtlest happiness of a woman often consists.”

The door opened, and Robert Hawthorne himself came in, very grave, respectful, and surprised.

“Robert Hawthorne, I have come to see your wife,” said Lady Leigh, abruptly.

“Lilian will be very glad ; she has long desired it,” replied Robert, with frank dignity.

“Has she ? I am sure she has had little need. But first I am glad of the opportunity of speaking to you.”

Having made this beginning, Lady Leigh paused, struck with the painfulness of what she had undertaken, and scarcely knowing how to broach it with sufficient caution if, perchance, as yet, no alarm had suggested itself to Robert. He waited for her to proceed, having a presenti-

ment of her mission, but, finding that she still hesitated, he himself said, though not without an effort—

“You have been struck by the change in Lilian’s looks: she is not strong, but she has no real illness, nothing seriously to fear.” He looked as if he longed to be reassured on the matter, however.

Lady Leigh understood him, and, full of pity, spoke cheerfully.

“I am quite relieved to hear you say so, for last Sunday at Minster prayers I thought her looking very white and fragile, and I determined to come and beg a favour of you. I know you tradesmen cannot leave your shops like those who have no occupation, but if you will confide her to me I will take her to the sea-side and nurse her myself. I believe she wants change of air more than anything else; when she was younger, she had frequent change, as you may know.”

“Whatever my dear wife wants, I am both able and willing to give her. Why did not Dr. Sandford suggest change of air before?” exclaimed Robert, anxiously.

"Do not consult Dr. Sandford on the matter ; he is nothing but an old croaker," replied Lady Leigh, with vexed impatience. "Besides, he says that Lilian, unlike many women who have suffered loss in their household, has a positive reluctance to leave home."

Robert Hawthorne tacitly understood from this that Lady Leigh had herself been consulting the physician, and that what he had admitted, had been of a nature to increase her fears ; he could not, however, bring himself to ask explanation, and the opportunity passed away.

Unheard, she was so light of foot, Lilian had come downstairs, and now appeared in the opening of the folding-doors, with a sudden flush of surprise on her delicate face. The instant she saw Lady Leigh she uttered a cry of joy, and ran to her, while the stately old dame rose up all trembling and received her with as much affection as if her heart had yearned to her every day during the two long years of their separation. The tears were in Lilian's eyes, of course, but she found voice enough to falter out how glad she was.

"You are astonished to see me, and well you may be," replied Lady Leigh, with a grave shake of her head; "however, I thought it was time we forgave each other. Kiss me and sit down, for you are shaking like an aspen-leaf."

The ancient lady evidently believed that all the grace of pardon was her own, but Lilian did not care for that, so long as they were reconciled. Robert drew his young wife's favourite chair near to that of their visitor, shook up the cushions, and put her gently into it, for she had betrayed signs of sinking on her knees, and of otherwise resuming the loving humilities of her girlhood; so she contented herself with holding her benefactress's two withered hands and reiterating her expressions of joy.

"And what do you think is the special part of my mission?" Lady Leigh asked, looking at her attentively. "It is to beg Robert to make you over to me for a few weeks, to be nursed and taken better care of than you take of yourself."

"Oh! but I could never be spared from home; could I, Robert?" said Lilian, determinedly.

"The little thing has a great idea of her own value! But my proposal was to carry you off to the sea and strengthen you up, and perhaps Robert cannot conveniently give the time to go with you."

Lilian's eyes turned with a wistful, coaxing expression to Robert, as she answered—

"I know what I should like if I might do it."

"What, Lily?" said Robert, eagerly.

"To make your summer journey with you. I am sure that would do me good. You are going where we went when we were married."

"And where is that?" Lady Leigh inquired.

"Into Lancashire, Westmoreland, and Cumberland, and home again through the most beautiful parts of Yorkshire."

"If it were not too fatiguing I see no objection; but how do you travel? that is the main consideration."

"Oh, we have a phaeton now; have you never seen Robert driving me out in it?" said Lilian, laughing.

"Yes, Mistress Pride, I have."

"The old gig was so high that I was afraid

of climbing into it, and besides, it threatened to fall to pieces at every jolt; so, though Mr. Otley insisted that a gig was more appropriate and respectable for a tradesman, Robert bought a phaeton to please me. The journey would only be like taking new and pleasant drives every day. There is nothing I should enjoy more."

"Then you shall certainly try it, Lily; in the best season of the year—long days, and sunny days; I don't doubt that it will do you good."

"It is not the variety only," said Lady Leigh; "she wants to identify herself with the business transactions, and to become a little tradeswoman; she will elect herself to the office of chief clerk by and bye."

Lilian laughed, but made no confession; perhaps her white little fingers *had* put themselves once and again to commonplace uses—when Mr. Constant fell suddenly ill, for instance, and was six weeks away from the office, and George Sancton chose to arrange his wedding for the beginning of the New Year, when there were sheafs of bills to make out; she had not practised secretaryship for nothing to an old lady with a

large correspondence; and it is certain she could ply an active little pen upon occasion. It was a curious change, however, to hear Lady Leigh jest on so low a theme; but, in fact, the sight of Robert's house had mollified her into the idea that buyers and sellers were not necessarily vulgar. If it had been a shining, new place out of the town, she would have been less gratified; but that he should have contented himself by staying in his uncle's old house, and changing its dismal appearance into one really tasteful and refined, showed a modest sense of his position and its natural embellishments, which was highly satisfactory to a mind ever antagonistic to progress and the arrogance of one class galling the heels of another. It *might* have occurred to her that it was the *business* of the head of the firm of Hawthorne and Co. to have skill and good taste in house decoration and everything there-to appertaining, but it did not.

Robert presently returned to the office, leaving his wife and her old friend to complete their reconciliation alone, which they did, with many kisses and many tears, as the custom of women is.

Lilian had to speak of her little one in heaven ; and Lady Leigh to express her proud satisfaction in the birth of an heir to Hadley Royal ; she was rather curious to learn how Robert Hawthorne had taken the news of the event, but Lilian discreetly evaded the subject, and the old lady was too well-feeling to press it ; she could conjecture pretty accurately the state of the case. Before taking her leave, she engaged Lilian to pay an early visit to the Minster hill ; and, in reply to the pæan of praise, which the happy little wife could not resist the triumph of singing in her husband's honour, she good-humouredly replied—

“ You were wiser in your generation, Lilian, than I was myself ; your choice has turned out well ; but with Nugent blood in his veins Robert Hawthorne could not fail to have some of the sentiments and feelings of a gentleman.”

IV.

It was a genuine pleasure to Lilian to find herself, after nearly three years' exile, once more admitted to the sacred shade of Lady Leigh's pot-pourri-scented drawing-room on the Minster hill. She went to spend a long day there on an occasion when Robert was called into the country on business, and Lady Nugent and Mistress Alice Johnes came also to luncheon.

Since Lola was left in Paris for her artistic training under her own kin, Lady Leigh had not adopted any child exclusively, but had given her time and her money to the bringing forward of pretty, portionless, marriageable girls, and acting by them the part of a good providence. Lilian had to listen to the story of all her charitable works in this department, and heard with pleasure that those two proper and discreet young women, Sophia and Caroline Lowther, had been provided with sufficient por-

tions to secure them very good establishments in life.

"But what you would not have expected from me, my dear, is the procuring of a silly love-match; and yet that is what I have lately been about," said Lady Leigh, with a glow of inward satisfaction illuminating her dark visage; "my sister, Lady Nugent, could not have been more foolish or enthusiastic about it than I was myself."

"I am sure it was a good work," said Lilian, mischievously.

"That is yet to be proved. They are as poor as church mice and mere children, but I was touched—really, my dear, touched—more than I had ever been since I was young myself and a slim ensign courted me, but I had wise parents."

"I don't know, Lady Leigh, whether they *were* wise if you loved each other, for a marriage of love is the happiest lot God can give us."

"My dear, I will admit you as an authority on the subject; 'tis easy to see that Robert does not believe there exists anywhere an equal to his dear wife. I thought you would give him some trouble, you had your wilful little tempers."

"And have still—but they save us from monotony; don't say they are wilful, though, for they come and go in my own despite."

"And I dare say Robert finds them easy to forgive; indeed, men ought to have a great deal of indulgence for their wives when they consider what they must suffer for them—only they don't consider it. And of all the miserable things on the face of the earth, the marriage of a woman to a stupid, selfish, heartless man is the most miserable. I have seen it, my dear; I have seen it."

"And your slim ensign, Lady Leigh, what became of him?"

"What became of him, my dear? Why he married a pretty child without a sixpence, and they had a great family of children; Waterloo made her a widow, and it is precisely with his eldest boy that I have just been making myself busy, with Arthur Davenport and Cecy Lisle—you know Cecy? she is niece to Sir Philip Nugent's wife. Her mother made a runaway love-match in her time, and has never been quite forgiven for it yet."

"It is as pretty a little story as I ever read in a book!" said Lilian, pleased and laughing.

"Yes, my dear, there is the germ of a romance in it. My young pair—I always call them mine—are so full of themselves and their happiness and innocence, and the beauty, goodness, and delight of everything they see, that to me they appear respectively five and six years old—not a grain of experience between them. If you meet on your travels with two young fools making the best of an ensign's pay and a hundred a year additional, with pretty laughing faces and a general faith in the truth and purity of the world, you may be quite sure they are my pair. My nephew, Sir Philip, bought Arthur his commission, and Cecy's grandmother, Lady Lowther, gave an old lace wedding-gown; as for poor Julia, her mother, she sewed like a seamstress for them both, and sent them out really well supplied. I have promised them a hundred a year for as long as they live together without a quarrel; and really, my dear, though as a rule I have a very poor opinion of love-matches,

I do believe that in this instance I shall have to settle my gift in perpetuity."

"I hope you will; and whether or no, they will have had their happy season."

"Mistress Alice Johnes ought to be here now to lecture you on such irregular views of life."

"She would not change my mind: I think it good and right to take whatever of happiness the present offers us, and to leave the future evil to take care of itself. We must all drink our portion of sorrow, but we need not mix additional draughts of bitterness which no duty prescribes; that is my philosophy."

"And I suppose it was in the spirit of that philosophy that you ventured to defy me and marry Robert Hawthorne," said Lady Leigh, to which Lilian replied with a blushing smile and a pretty little audacious gesture of the head, which made her old patroness first call her a naughty thing and then kiss her forgivingly. There was not much change perceptible in the ancient benefactress of orphans so far as looks or bodily vigour went, but Lilian noticed that

she expressed gentler, more charitable, and more sympathetic feelings than were formerly common on her lips. The active practical goodness of her life had returned upon herself with softening power, and had made her in reality what once she had only seemed ; and at this moment, sitting in the sunshine of a kind deed, a genial warmth infused itself into her words and ways such as was perhaps originally more her nature than the austere deportment we have known as hers hitherto. When, at midday, Lady Nugent and Mrs. Alice Johnes arrived, Lilian was sorry to have their two-handed chat interrupted ; but perceiving that Lady Nugent had some communication of importance to make to her sister, she permitted the little Welshwoman to draw her away to the window for a brief gossip apart. While listening to her inflated trifles, however, she could not but be aware of something painful going on so near her ; Lady Nugent seemed inexpressibly saddened, but Lady Leigh, whose ire was never difficult to rouse, showed herself violently indignant.

“ But Dr. Sandford says he has no longer a

doubt of it," were the first words Lillian distinctly heard in Lady Nugent's grieved voice.

"Dr. Sandford is a simpleton!" was Lady Leigh's sharp rejoinder. "There was never a Nugent born into the world yet who was not perfectly sound in body and sane in mind. I will never believe that such an intolerable disgrace is to fall upon the family now. The boy's eyes are brighter a great deal than Dr. Sandford's own."

Lillian, at hearing these expressions, glanced inquiringly at Mistress Alice Johnes, who bent forward and whispered:

"Such a very painful thing, my dear; have you not heard? Dr. Sandford says Lady Nugent's son was born blind; he has not begun to notice anything, and they think even worse than that:" she touched her forehead significantly with her forefinger.

Lady Leigh began to pace the room angrily, protesting and reasoning against Dr. Sandford's report, and emphasizing her words every now and then by a thud of the gold-headed cane which supported her steps. The mortification.

of the truth was too keen to be believed. Lady Nugent said she was going to drive over to Hadley Royal to visit Phyllis and comfort her that afternoon—would her sister go? No; Lady Leigh would not go; she did not believe there was any need for comfort, and she would never give any credit to the idea that that wild goose Dr. Sandford chose to promulgate until it had been certified by the first medical men in the kingdom. The intelligence, whether true or false, had, however, quite spoilt her for enjoying Lilian's company, and when Lady Nugent drove away after luncheon to Hadley, she almost repented that she had not gone too.

"It is scarcely possible that such a humiliation is to befall me in my old age," said she, pettishly. "I was so proud to think that there was a son at last to carry on the old family, and yet they dare to say he is blind, and that if he lives, he will be of weak intellect. How do they pretend to know? But can anything more disappointing, more cruel, more mortifying, be imagined! Phyllis had better never have borne a son at all. What a blow it will be to Philip!" And so on

for an hour or more, alternately asserting her utter disbelief in the possibility of such a calamity, and commenting on it as an ascertained fact.

When the afternoon was half spent, she grew still more restless and impatient of herself, and began to think it would only be right and kind to go and reassure Phyllis, and ascertain for her own satisfaction how much or how little of Dr. Sandford's opinion was worthy of credit.

"Yes, I ought to go, my dear, but first come upstairs to my room with me, for when I once get to Hadley Royal," said she, querulously, "there most likely I shall remain until you have set off on your journey with Robert. I am very glad to have seen you, and but for this bad news it would have done me a world of good."

Lilian followed her up to the solemn well-remembered room, from the door of which she had once been repulsed, and on entering saw a vast cloak and hood of dark-blue military cloth hanging over the Chinese screen to air in the hot sun which was pouring in at the window. Lady Leigh pointed to this extensive garment with a smile, and said—

"I am going to give you my cloak as a travelling wrap, and mind you are not too proud to wear it, though it is a little out of date in the fashion of its cut. The air of the Dales is sharp and the showers are sudden, but neither rain nor cold will penetrate this old travelling companion of mine—they do not make such cloaks for women now; and don't forget to pull the hood over your head, if you should happen to be out late when the dew falls; the damp is not good for your chest."

Lilian was very grateful for the care and affection the gift implied, and gave all the required promises, which led Lady Leigh to expatiate somewhat sentimentally on the various adventures she had had in that old cloak.

"When it was new, I was as young a wife as you, and crossed the Alps in it with my Lord Leigh, who was passionately fond of travelling," said she. "Napoleon had not then been there, my dear, and travelling was a very different thing from what it is now; we stopped a night at the Hospice of St. Bernard, and a miserable, dreary place I recollect it was. There is scarcely a country in Europe where I and my old cloak

have not been together, so use it respectfully, Lilian, as a vestment that could tell you many strange experiences if it would. And mind, my dear, to take particular care of yourself. Is Robert thoughtful for you? men are not always thoughtful!"

"Oh, yes; he spoils me to my heart's content."

"And according to your philosophy, you would rather have a life short and happy, than long and tedious."

Lilian cordially answered, "Yes;" though she did not see the bearing of the remark on anything that had gone before.

"Why should not my life be *long* and happy too?" said she, and Lady Leigh only replied, "Why not?" and renewed her careful injunctions as to the wearing of the cloak, and especially of the hood.

"And now, my love, you will not think me unkind if I send you away earlier than I intended," added she, drawing Lilian's soft, delicate cheek to her own wrinkled one, with an affection that was rarely visible in her gestures. "Should

that croaking old doctor's report be true, Phyllis will need all of us to console her ; she is a very good mother, and surely *this* sorrow of hers must be greater than even the loss of children. How say you, Lilian,—you should know ?”

“I think it is. I grew resigned to Lucy's loss in remembering that our Father in Heaven had her safe ; but I believe the anguish of seeing a little innocent always suffering would have made my heart passionately rebellious.”

“I could have borne your trial, too, better than this of poor Phyllis's ; but I never had a choice of either ; and I dare say the sorrow of being childless was as grievous to me in my proud young days, more grievous even, than your loss, or her distress. But I am an old woman now, and have no very distinct recollection of these things, so it is foolish to talk : a sign that I am nearing the bottom of the hill, that I begin to babble of the past.”

Once started on her road to Hadley, the horses could not go fast enough for Lady Leigh's impatience ; but, arrived there, all the worst news was soon but too well confirmed. She found

Sir Philip in a frame of proud annoyance, and Phyllis heavily crying by the child's cot, while her mother offered her dry, hard precepts of fortitude and resignation, in which there was neither profit or consolation. There was more comfort in one kiss from her little daughter, one clasp of the gentle arms about her neck, or in one soft word of hope from pale-faced old grand-mamma Nugent, than in all the dignified counsels of Lady Lowther, whose sleep and appetite never once failed her in this crisis of family trouble.

Lady Leigh had not much tenderness, but she had great pride in the Nugent race, and would rather see it extinct than dragged on in an enervated line. Looking at the feeble little baby-face, which had no trace of its great forefathers about it, and only a stamp of weak physical misery, she said softly to herself, that it would be well if it would please God to take it.

And it did please God to take it: there was no welcome and little love for such a poor reckling in that house of luxury and pride. Phyllis suffered and loved, as mothers must suffer and

love, but she did not regret it; if it had lived, it would have been a reproach to her more than a treasure. Imbecile and blind, who but her could have borne with it?—and how much was her pleasure-loving nature capable of bearing, even for an afflicted child? Alas! the proof was best spared her.

Within a very few months the little sealed eyes were opened in heaven; and old John, the stone-cutter in the Minster Yard, was busy whistling and chipping at a fine white marble monument, "To the memory of Everard, infant son of Sir Philip Nugent, of Hadley Royal, and of Phyllis his wife."

CHAPTER THE SECOND.

MARTYRS.

"LET our unceasing, earnest prayer
 Be, too, for light—for strength to bear
 Our portion of the weight of care,
 That crushes into dumb despair
 One-half the human race.

"O suffering, sad humanity!
 O ye afflicted ones, who lie
 Steeped to the lips in misery,
 Longing and yet afraid to die,
 Patient, though sorely tried!

"I pledge you in this cup of grief,
 Where floats the fennel's bitter leaf.
 The battle of our life is brief,
 The alarm—the struggle—the relief—
 Then sleep we side by side."

LONGFELLOW.

I.

WHEN Robert Hawthorne and his wife, in the course of their journey, stopped at Millburn, the factory folk of that great town had been out on

strike between two and three months. The canopy of smoke which habitually hung black and dense over its streets and close-packed houses, had made way for sweet summer airs ; but it had made way too for the inroads of gaunt famine, pestilence, and death amongst the thousands to whom its presence was the sign of labour, wages, and daily bread.

When we have the courage to affront this simple fact in all its fatal significance, our hearts may well stand still in wonder and admiration of the great patience of the poor. Surely it will be counted to them for righteousness against the weight of their blind sin and ignorant, weariful perversity ! Think of it,—not the privation of one meal, not the pinched pains of one day, not the sharp grip of want which father or mother can bear because they bear it alone, but the emptiness of a household, the emptiness of hundreds of households ! the swift perishing of virile strength, the pallid wasting of little children's frames, the blank silent suffering that lays hold of body and soul, and wears them down to the edge of the grave. And this is borne in *patience*—patience, the special

virtue and strength of the poor. "As thy day is, so shall thy strength be," had need to be one of the first of God's truths taught to those whose day is destined to carry from sunrise to sunset a too heavy burden of labour and sorrow.

At the best of times they rarely get more than the rind of the fruit of their toils; their brows sweat for the luxuries that are to lap the softness of their betters; and they go home contented to their hard fare and hard rest with a dim consciousness that the difference is ordained by an everlasting law to which men have only to submit. Not against their work do they rebel; not against the scant pleasures and daily insufficiency of food which by and bye becomes as habitual and natural to them as over-abundance becomes indispensable to the rich; but only when they are ground down in their wages until barely enough is changed into literal need; then the dumb sentiment of natural justice is roused, wakes up, protests in patient indignation—protests sometimes with violence and force, to be cowed into silence again by a more powerful force, but ultimately to be heard and to have its influence. When? The sufferers

may, indeed, ask "*When?*" with an incredulous bitterness.

How long must we labour in the fields in darkness, in cold, in rain, stiffened by pain into premature age, for a pittance on which we and our children starve rather than live? How long shall the ploughers, the sowers, the reapers of earth's rich harvest have but a scant gleanings for their wages? How long shall the thews and sinews of a man be worth to him for his twelve hours under the sky, every day for three hundred days in the year, no more than eight or ten shillings a week, with the workhouse as a harbour of refuge in his old age?

How long shall we others toil in close rooms, with the dust clogging our lungs and the greedy machinery every now and then snatching a sacrifice from amongst us, and rending him limb from limb? How long shall we and our children pine in miserable lanes where the air and sunshine of heaven cannot come—where death and disease abide continually, and their ghastly brother Famine comes at our master's will and beats us into submission?

How long shall we women be starved into sin?

How long shall we children be crippled with ignorance in soul, and stunted in body by lack of bread? How long will covetous men muzzle the patient ox that treads out the corn, and insolently uphold that the labourer is *not* worthy of his hire?

Such cries as these have gone up to heaven from amongst us too often; the answer that a better time will come is too indefinite.

What will it be to me, whose little ones asked bread when I had none to give them, and whose wails are in my ears night and day though the sods of the churchyard cover them, that the better time comes to me alone, the mother of none but dead children?

What will it be to me that the better time should give me enough and to spare, the day after the love of my youth has fallen asleep in my arms in exhaustion and hunger, never, never more, to wake up again to the pain of our hard life?

What will the better time be to me, polluted temple of affection, or to me fettered in the bands of young crime, or to me bruised and broken and wrung with misery?

The past cannot be undone; our wrongs can never be righted; our times of anguish cannot be un-lived; our withered hearts can put forth no new blooms; the shadow of our suffering can never take its cold chill out of our souls. Human like you, capable of all love and all virtue, starved by the same frosts, warmed by the same suns, equal in kind but inferior in degree, no future can help us to forget our past. The things done bear their eternal consequences; nothing can ever set us right, except the glorious renewal of life in the flood that you and we must cross over with the pale steersman Death?

And beyond that flood, amongst the ranks of the noble army of martyrs, is a great company of the faithful and patient poor who, not in this world able to see the why of their cruel sacrifice, yet carried their cross humbly until Death took it and gave them their crown instead. In the great plains of heaven how shall some of us meet these despised and oppressed and down-trodden ones? Even there will the pale trace of their wounds haunt us, reproach us, if ever we have closed our ears to their cry or hardened our hearts against their distress.

The same God who said that we should have the poor always with us, said that charity to them was something lent to him which should be repaid, and that, besides, it should cover a multitude of sins. Men have taken that promise to heart, and have thus found it often easier to be *charitable* than to be *just*, to give an alms easier than to pay a wage.

Our age has somewhat of its duty to do which has been too long forgotten in this same article of wage for labour. What has the labouring man now that he had not one, two, three, four, five, six, a dozen centuries ago? Is he better lodged? Look at his miserable cabin amongst the fields, his loathsome room in the great cities, where his children fester in sickness and sin. Is he better clad? See him shivering his way to his winter labours; see the blue thin limbs of his little ones; no great advance here on the primitive woad and the sheep-skins. Is he better fed? He has what keeps body and soul together, and no more; less he could not have, even when his feudal masters sat in damp stone rooms luxuriously carpeted with rushes.

And what have the rich, the master classes,

gained in the progress of civilization? Luxuries so enervating, that their very over-multiplicity becomes the theme of feeble, dolorous, ludicrous complaint in newspapers; our rose-leaf is crumpled, our stimulated palates loathe rich food and crave ever-fresh delights! We have cried, "God help the poor!" long enough; it is high time that we should call Him to the rescue of the rich—save them from the bathos of repletion, from the stagnant bogs of selfish indulgence!

It has seemed to me, sometimes, in considering this vexed question of labour and wages, that there is a long outstanding debt due to the working people of this country which will have to be paid.

What has been withheld by the strong hand is no other than robber's spoil in fact, and will have to be disgorged sooner or later. But these are dangerous subjects, not to be handled with impunity—lest the consequences prove disastrous as the child's flinging fire about.

But let us imagine a Utopia where the greed of gain and luxury is not the predominant, all-absorbing passion; where one class is contented with rather less, that another may have a little.

more; where the rule of right reigns in lieu of the rule of might, and men yield to others their due, not because they *must*, but because they *ought*. There is a clutching rapacity outside this Utopia which grinds, and grinds, and grinds, without remorse, until it has discovered the minimum of what a poor soul will take for the use of the physical machine in which it vegetates; and, this stupendous problem worked out to a man's own entire satisfaction, he begins to preach solemnly on the laws of supply and demand, and to profess himself an apostle of social science and political economy: hear him, the wise and able person, and then reduce his frothy doctrines to their first principles. He has actually found out that his working brothers agree with the old adage, in thinking "half a loaf better than no bread!"—and if half a loaf can be made to represent a whole one shall he be so lavish as to double this dole. He has made the standard, and there are selfish fools by thousands ready to range themselves under it, and stint the worker of his hire to the finest limits of human endurance. But in Utopia it is another thing. The

masters there content themselves with smaller profits, and let some little more of the gain fall to the hard hands that earn it all; there is not so much show and waste in one home or such grievous pinching need in another: and yet this Utopia seems not unreal; it seems as if it might be reduced to actual practice, if men would cease to regard their fellow-men as chattels to be bought cheap, instead of their equals in all but the accident of position.

If we could change places for a single year! If the rotund comely master, with his kind wife and little, laughing, healthy children, could be unconsciously transported from their warm pleasant cheerful rooms, their abundant table, their soft beds, their easy pleasures, to the one attic in the close alley where lives the poor factory hand with his ailing wife and brood of neglected little ones, where, in a few months, would be the sleek and rosy outlines of their faces, the pompous self-content of their daily life and conversation? The winter winds blow, there is ice on the pane, there is robin pecking at the window-sill; close round the handful of fire in the starved grate, closer

and closer still, but the very flame is poverty-bitten and will not warm them; there is the meal on the table,—*so very little for so many, but it must do*; then half hungry to bed, and up again in the dark morning, and forth to the mill while the rich world has two hours on its pillow still. This is the discipline of life of thousands—thousands. Hard to realize, almost impossible to realize without the experience. And how little more, spared in the shape of wages for honest work from the masters' superfluity, would change all this, give the labourer and his children *enough*; a very common-place word that *enough*, but between it and *too little* lies the deep but narrow gulf which swallows up young lives as if they were nought, and weakens by its faint miasma the vital strength and courage of the sinews of labour by which the world exists.

I shall never forget the odd look of a tall, lank farm-labourer, who had a wife and but one child, of whom I asked the simple question—

“Why do you always chew that bit of tobacco?”

“Because it keeps me from feeling hungry.”

“But what business have *you* ever to be hungry

when you are working all the year round on the Squire's farm, and have only two to keep besides yourself?"

"I have worked here from a lad—I worked for the Squire's father before him, and my lad will work for the Squire's son after him."

"Yes, but about being hungry and the tobacco?"

"I get eighteen-pence a day, that's nine shillings a week—and when you have taken off the rent, and the bit of coals, and the shoes and clothes, there's none so much left to eat, is there?"

I thought there was not much—and the man's patient, uncomplaining resignation of tone and expression while he said so seemed to me pathetic exceedingly. Think of the deep fortitude it needs to bring a man to acquiesce silently in such a lot—wearing out life, hope, energy in an incessant toil which does not even earn enough to stay the cravings of hunger!—the Squire, doing only what others did and do, seeing good days, and as ignorant of any want or lack for himself or his, as if he were a lily of the field! Poor old Squire! sixpence a day more out of thy plump purse would have put a few ounces of flesh on

thy labourer's bones, and through all the fifty years of his faithful service would not have cost thee more than one caprice of thy wealth, of which thou art weary as soon as possessed. And by so much of his deservings as thou didst living withhold from him, wilt thou die in his debt: a curious balancing of accounts should we come to, if we could follow this idea out, and bring up debtors and creditors to the bar of some Utopian County Court where Public Good Opinion is sitting Judge.

Already this digression is unconscionably long, but it touches on the one social question, which was the root of the distresses in Millburn thirty years ago, when Robert Hawthorne and his wife were there, and which seems to me the root of the periodical crises that occur in mining and manufacturing districts still; the field-labourer is too dependant and too isolated to rebel successfully, and his condition, in some respects, remains the worst of all. Not charity, if she had a hundred hands, could ever feed this want—not public government, for the question is at once individual and universal—not any temporary spasmodic effort

—but a higher sentiment of human justice and trading morality: an acknowledgment that a man's labour must be paid for according to its inherent value, and not according to his physical necessities, which reduce him to accept less than its value—as much—or as little, rather—as he can get.

Will this Utopian state of feeling ever reign amongst us? I think it will, when the rich man ceases to mock his Maker, by oppressing the poor; and the diligent shall eat of the labour of his hands and be *satisfied*. No very great thing to ask, and in the long run cheaper than work-houses, reformatories, prisons, hospitals, ragged-schools, and grudging charity doles, and a solvent of some of the hardest difficulties that beset our social condition as a nation.

One cannot live in the quietest way, with one's eyes open, without seeing how the working poor pinch, and spare, and toil, to exist; a bit of help in sickness, a present at Christmas time, are so gratefully welcome: ought it to be so?—ought those who can *work* to need *charity*? Plenty of the homeless to shelter, plenty of the naked to

clothe, the incapable destitute to feed, plenty of the poor *always* with us to keep that Christian virtue in exercise, without its being diverted into a voluntary payment of other men's debts; for I maintain and repeat that by so much as the master withholds of fair wage from his worker, by just so much, with ever-accumulating interest, does he remain indebted to him.

II.

Lilian sat by herself half the warm July afternoon in the great cushioned bow-window of the principal room at the quiet, old-fashioned inn where Robert Hawthorne or his travelling clerk were accustomed to stop on their periodical journeys. It was in a wide suburb leading, in a direct line out of Millburn, to the river and the unenclosed meadows on either side of it, called by the townsfolk the Marsh. The sunshine was on the other side of the way, full against a row of hard-looking red-brick houses, with flights of steps up to the doors, and Milan blinds projecting above every window. The street was as silent at that hour as a street

in a city of the dead, and Lilian, who had had a delightful drive in the cool of the morning, followed by dinner, was now enjoying a quiet rest, cosily packed up with all the cushions in the room upon the low window-seat, while Robert went to call on his business friends in the town. He was to come back to tea, and had promised afterwards to take her out for a walk, either upon the Marsh, or, if she preferred it, into the town itself; she was, therefore, rather disappointed, when, an hour earlier than she expected him, he returned, saying that it would scarcely be fit for her to leave the inn that evening, because there was going to be a meeting of the hands out of work upon the Marsh, and the street would be in an incessant turmoil. While they were sitting at tea, already they heard the first murmurs of a popular gathering, and saw clusters of men and women wending their way to the place of rendezvous. Soon these clusters grew to a continuous stream, until Lilian thought that every great artery of the town must be pouring its current of life-blood towards the Marsh. It was easy enough to distinguish the general cha-

racteristics of these people, all the more marked and striking that the struggle in which they had now been engaged between two and three months, was becoming visibly a struggle for life or death : once let the steaming autumnal miasmas around their dwellings begin to act, and these human beings, already debilitated by privation, would drop before the sickle of death as drops the ripe corn beneath the sickle of the reaper.

“ Robert, isn’t it very cruel ? I never saw such dreadful faces in my life ; look at that poor man there with the child asleep on his shoulder,” said Lilian, in an awed whisper, while her eyes burnt with a pain too strong for tears. .

The man she indicated was a specimen as good as any ; tall, bony, with great pallid hands clasping the child against his breast ; a gaunt, hollow face, gray as a corpse, and eyes sunken, dreary, and spiritless. He trailed his limbs feebly, and looked like a man who had risen from a fever - stricken bed to attend this demonstration —probably he had.

“ Oh ! Robert, I wish you would run out and give him something !” cried Lilian, clasping her

hands passionately. "I can never bear to remember him if you don't."

"Darling, he is not a beggar; we cannot use these men like beggars, but I will try to find him at home;" and while he was speaking, the poor waif passed out of view with the stream, to be succeeded by others and others again with every seal of necessity impressed upon their pallid, worn faces; if Robert had gone to relieve all for whom Lilian's heart bled, he would have needed the purse of Fortunatus.

For an hour and a half the tide of human life poured by, without let or pause. What was, perhaps, most of all remarkable, was the exceeding patience and quietness of the multitude; beyond the sordid tramp of so many feet, there was scarcely a sound at all. It was like the heavy silence that portends a fearful storm. Hitherto there had been no outrage committed, and the people seemed intent on winning for their cause the reputation of a great, passive fortitude and strength; this had been urged upon them by John Dawson and others, who had come to Millburn on the same mission as himself during the

strike, and thus far with success. But their silence had done nothing for them, less than nothing; during the week that was just past, several masters had brought hands from a distance and reopened their mills. John Dawson was coming to-night to speak on this very subject.

About seven o'clock the street was restored to its previous quietness, and only now and then a solitary individual strolled idly in the direction of the Marsh, not so interested as curious to know what might be going on. Robert was unwilling to leave Lilian, but she knew he would like to judge for himself of the effect on the multitude of what might be said, and she urged him to go, not being in the least afraid of anything happening in his absence; in the end he went.

The people were collected in a dense mass in front of an elevated bank, to the number of many thousands, and John Dawson was standing upon one of the rude seats formed by the bole of a cut-down tree, to address them. So hushed was the throng, and so calm the evening, that every word of his thrilling, distinct

voice was audible even to Robert Hawthorne, who stood out amongst the rear ranks, close by where the broad river rippled its way to the sea. He was listened to for some time in patient silence, but at length it began to appear that there was an opposition spirit rising in the crowd, for here and there broke out a dissentient cry, a derisive shout, or a telling question.

Robert's attention was for a minute distracted by a groan beside him, and then a dispirited voice saying, "We'se get nothing by it;" and, looking round, he found that he had for his neighbour the poor fellow who had attracted so much of Lilian's sympathy. Robert stealthily put his hand into his pocket, and, taking out some money, offered it to the man, who, while eyeing it hungrily, still paused to ask—

"Are you one o' they masters? The union says we'se to take nought fro' they masters."

"I am not a mill-master," replied Robert; "and, besides, this is from a woman."

"Thank you, sir, for the little 'uns at home; there's three besides this 'un, an' th' wife's dead."

Robert could have guessed it.

A sudden movement in the crowd thrust them apart, and then Robert saw Dawson stand down from the rude estrade he had occupied, while another man, younger and taller, rose suddenly in his place. Robert looked again with a thick throbbing at his heart, and a sudden flush over his face. The new apostle of the people was his brother Cyrus.

Cyrus! The same careless grace in his figure, attitudes, gestures; the same eager, beautiful visage, the same pleasant, light, clear voice; bare-headed, the dark rings of his hair stirred by the wind, and his bright eyes wandering over the sea of faces turned towards his, with a curious unconsciousness of what they expressed. He began to speak, and was listened to for some time with greater patience than Dawson had been. His utterance was very distinct, fluent, and even—but what was it that it lacked, and made his weightiest periods of no significance whatever? In ten minutes and less, the heart of the suffering multitude had felt that this man had nothing in common with them, and that while he spoke of their rights and their grievances in pathetic

language, the whole subject was as unreal to him as his last night's dreams. Neither assent or dissent was expressed to any of his propositions, until a hard, rebuking voice called out from the crowd—

“Let a’ be, let a’ be! thee knaws naught o’ uz, nor our needs. Let’s ha’ Dawson agen, or where’s Butterfield?”—when Cyrus, with a smile on his face, quietly jumped down and made way for his successor.

Robert’s breast swelled. Oh, if Cyrus had been ever so mistaken, if he had only been true! But to bring his gay indifference into the midst of these living thousands, wrung out with misery, and to make pretence of teaching them and leading them, was a cruel, insensate mockery! The density of the crowd prevented any approach to him then, but in its dispersion he was sure to be able to reach him, so he stood quietly, listening and waiting, but the chief interest now centred on his brother.

The next speaker, Butterfield, was a large, coarse-looking man, whose vehement sentences had a certain ring in them of coming straight

from his heart. Once or twice Dawson essayed to interrupt him, to calm him, but in vain. The temper of the people was with him, and he was immediately sensible of it. Perhaps it carried him further than he intended. Soon his blood was on fire, and the sparks flew from his lips. No meek preacher of the might of passive, patient resistance was this Butterfield; but a preacher of brute force, the strong hand, the *red* hand, if heed be. Many a time had the like frothy invectives burst from Dawson, too, but it was in the presence of a different audience, and in a different place. In a room filled with curious hearers, who would criticise and go home to supper; when words were safe, however violent, from working immediate mischief. But the present was altogether another occasion. Thousands, with hearts and lives in the matter, wearied out with suffering and bondage; men with no shadowy wrongs, no chimerical pains, but hunger fretting at their own vitals, and at the vitals of wives and children. Men, like tow, ready to kindle at the first spark.

Dawson stood up beside his associate, his mean,

pallid features kindled into fervour, and cried out—

“One act of violence, one breach of law, and all is undone that we have striven for three months to gain—the weight of public opinion on our side! Do not, do not lose your own cause.”

His voice was drowned in a storm of angry clamour and cries of, “Butterfield, let’s hear Butterfield.” In no mischievous intent did this man begin his arguments, but his own vehemence acting on the people, and their heated approval reacting upon himself, he went on after Dawson’s last interruption with more incautious and more dangerous themes. Robert Hawthorne became sensible that an evil spirit was stirring in the crowd, and that it would hardly disperse that night without some violence or outrage. A little matter precipitated it—some casual word dropped (the law failed afterwards to disentangle the beginning of it, and amongst the many conjectures that rose, perhaps the true one was never hit upon).

Somebody mentioned Arklow Mills, and im-

mediately it seemed as if that shibboleth was on every lip. While Butterfield was still speaking the mass of the crowd was in motion, and all at once with a shout hundreds ran down the river bank to the entrance of a narrow lane, parallel with the wide suburb through which they had reached the Marsh. Down this lane was the entrance to Arklow Mills.

Robert Hawthorne was swept on in the first impetus of the insurgent mass, but, quickly disentangling himself, he rushed to the inn where Lilian waited his return, forgetting, in his anxiety lest she should feel any alarm, that he was losing sight of his brother. Lilian had heard the first dreadful cry, and was gazing, white and tremulous, from the window at the turmoil, visible but incomprehensible, which was going on higher up the street, when he entered. Just at the same moment there was a loud shout from the lane at the back of the house, and the landlord came in to say that the mob were off to Arklow Mills, after no good, he was sure, but they would find themselves mistaken, for there had been soldiers there for the last hour and police in strong force,

to prevent any mischief in case the meeting on the Marsh did not pass off quietly.

How to describe this passion-fevered and blinded people flinging themselves against their fate desperately is beyond my pen. A wild tumult, hoarse shouts of despairing defiance, efforts to disperse, hundreds massed inextricably in a small space, sharp cracks of musketry—a few miserable lives ended.

In a quiet room of that old inn Robert Hawthorne saw these awaiting the coroner's inquest.

The poor fellow to whom he had spoken on the Marsh, his frail spark of life trampled out under the feet of his brothers in misery; not much change in his gaunt, white face, the anxious patience not lined out of it even by death, the trace on it of a last thought given to the "three little 'uns at home," and to the other that was saved alive in his dead arms.

An old man, one woman, three young men, a child of ten years old whom a shot struck by chance.

I know not what the finding of the jury was, but it should have been—"Done to death by

felonious parsimony ; " for whatever the immediate instrument of their ending, this was the guilt that prepared and directed it.

III.

The day after, John Dawson, Thomas Butterfield, and Cyrus Hawthorne were in custody on the grave charge of inciting the riot whose consequences had been so disastrous. Robert Hawthorne remained in Millburn, attended the examinations before the magistrates, and saw his brother committed with the other two to take his trial at the next assize at Lancaster. After taking Lilian home again, and sending out George Sancton on the journey which for themselves had ended so painfully, he went to Lancaster, there to remain near his brother until the trial came on.

To find himself in such a position was a terrible shock to Cyrus Hawthorne. No ennobling sentiment of self-devotion in the cause gave him the fictitious support of patriotic glory. His most

prominent idea was of his intense folly in engaging in it, and his blindness in never foreseeing this possible end to it. The further evils that might befall him were too real and prosaic to be shirked for a moment. The country was in panic at these risings amongst the people, execrated their leaders, demanded severe examples; it was just possible that he might have to pay with his life the forfeit of his incredible, preposterous absurdity. It is not every man who craves the crown of popularity who is ready to accept its cross of martyrdom. John Dawson and Thomas Butterfield met their defeat like men who had risked it with their eyes open, and with less regret for what they might suffer in their own persons, than for what their cause must suffer; men who detested their principles felt a respect for their sincerity and self-abnegation. If Robert Hawthorne could have had any consolation in finding his brother in such a situation, it would have been that, like his companions in misfortune, he had deep convictions by which he could live or die nobly, if mistakenly; but one or two interviews with him were sufficient to put it beyond a doubt

that all Cyrus felt in his emergency was the stupid blindness of his conduct hitherto, and the necessity of, to the utmost, striving to mitigate its consequences.

Sir Philip Nugent forgot in the critical position of his still dearest son that ever there had been dissension between them, and went to Lancaster to see him. He caused to be retained for his defence the best counsel, and with greater anxiety even than Robert, he also remained until the assizes came on; the six weeks that had to elapse aged him in appearance by ten years. He told Robert that he blamed himself for having driven Cyrus to extremity, and flung him amongst the associates whose dangerous principles necessity had urged him to espouse.

In the old house on the Minster hill there was burning impatience and restlessness too. Lady Leigh was in a state of angry distress, but the chief pain lurked in a younger, more passionate heart than hers. Poor little Lola had heard of Cyrus's calamity, and had asked Lady Leigh to receive her for a month's holiday, which her uncle Manuel reluctantly granted, when he found

that her mind was too agitated for her to be of any service to him professionally. From her Lady Leigh gathered some details of Cyrus's recent life. Lola, a child in years, was no longer a child in feeling, though not yet woman enough to hide how she suffered. It was the greatest consolation she could find at this juncture to go into Maiden Lane, and sit all the long afternoons and evenings with Lilian. Lilian was a patient listener, unselfish and soothing—above all, hopeful; and when she learnt that Lola loved Cyrus, all her tenderest womanly sympathies became enlisted for her.

Her childish figure was grown more soft and exceedingly graceful; her face, if not beautiful, was most expressive and touching. She would kneel down beside Lilian, and look up at her with great eyes swimming in tears, and ask the same question twenty times a day: "Oh! Lilian, do you think they will let him go? Do you think they will kill him?—good, beautiful Cyrus!"

How preach patience or resignation to those passionate unreasoning sentiments of hers? "If he dies, I will die too—oh! Lilian, I want to be

near him; I want to comfort him! You don't know what I feel! your heart is so quiet," and then the slender brown hands twisted themselves convulsively, as if, in wringing out physical pain, the dumb heartache would be eased. Or sometimes she would sit low on the floor, clasping her knees, and with her face bowed down upon them for hours; then she would begin to tell of how Cyrus visited their cottage at Chelsea, and how happy she was when he came. She had an idea that he was more noble and great of heart than heroes of antiquity, and that his present sacrifice was voluntary, a sacrifice for which all good men should honour and reverence him for ever. Lilian felt no call to undeceive her: if her love converted Cyrus Hawthorne into a magnanimous patriot so much the happier for her; the truth would have been the death of her love and of all the sweet, holy, exalting delusions that hover over the first passion of a pure heart. I doubt whether one thought of the faithful little soul who was grieving and praying for him, ever troubled Cyrus in his prison; he was too much occupied with himself and his very uneasy prospects.

Lilian had another frequent visitor too in the person of young Lady Nugent. She would come into Walton Minster every day, with her tiny daughter sitting in the carriage beside her, would go to Lady Leigh, and ask a hundred questions, impossible to answer, and offer suggestions equally fruitless. She avoided Lola, who always eyed her with jealous, suspicious resentment, but of Lilian she could ask without any fear of being misunderstood—"Have you any tidings from Lancaster to-day? How does Cyrus bear his imprisonment? What do Harding and Stedman think of his case?" And Lilian would tell her anything Robert might have written to her, and receive in return what Sir Philip Nugent had communicated to his wife. Phyllis had a fevered, sorrowful look all this time, which it was pitiful to witness. This anxious season of great dread, and the death of her little blind son, had developed in her a softness and womanliness of character, such as only an unselfish suffering for others ever does. Nothing like a common sorrow for obliterating differences of state and station. These four women waiting for the fiat that should be

pronounced upon Cyrus Hawthorne, had, as it were, but one heart and one interest. Also Sir Philip Nugent, his long-unforgiving son, old Hawthorne at Chinelyn, and poor Master Scrope, met on common ground, while their feelings hung on one common cause. A great grief is almost as hallowing in its effects as death; it levels down with its powerful hand all the little fictitious barriers men raise to fence themselves in from the rest of their kind, and shows them that in certain attributes of humanity all are equal for ever.

IV.

The trial came on and ended. John Dawson and Thomas Butterfield were sentenced each to seven years' transportation; Cyrus Hawthorne escaped with only two years' imprisonment.

Then came the violent revulsion of feeling in those who had suffered so much through their fears for him. Robert, Lola, and old Scrope experienced no desire to be angry with the cul-

prit who had got off so easily ; but Lady Leigh declared him not punished with sufficient severity; and even Sir Philip Nugent expressed a hope that the tedium of two years of prison life would open the young man's mind to sober reflection, and be an apprenticeship to a better course of conduct hereafter. Lola, Phyllis, and Lilian, felt that inexpressible exhilaration which, with some women, succeeds the removal of a great and painful pressure on their minds; so that for a time they actually felt as if some great good fortune had befallen them, over which they could laugh and cry for joy. Lola went back to her uncle, her concert exhibitions, and her hard practising; Phyllis invited agreeable company to Hadley Royal; and Lilian looked for Robert's coming home again with eager expectancy.

I don't know that one of them remembered to ask how it fared with the poor people at Millburn; their own tribulation, and now their own relief, was too lively and individual for the intrusion of any general questions. I may mention, therefore, that the strike ended in the usual way. When the poor could bear and rebel no

longer, they yielded and accepted the masters' terms.

Cyrus Hawthorne felt himself humiliated and persecuted; and in this curious view of his wrongs, he ran a risk of really developing into one of those bolstered falsities which are known as Modern Patriots. His repentance over his folly, his undignified disgust at himself, were the secrets of his own breast; but outside the prison there were honest, deluded folk, who toasted his name until it became as sacred as John Dawson's or Thomas Butterfield's; and there were Sunday papers that endowed him with every personal and moral virtue under the sun. He bought his little martyrdom very cheap; all this popularity was well worth having, and would, no doubt, have been exceedingly precious had it only been sincerely deserved.

V.

"Robert comes home to-night, Dorothea; I am waiting tea for him," said Lilian, as her ever-

constant friend walked into the parlour in Maiden Lane, at an hour of the evening when most of the Walton tradespeople's households had finished that sociable meal. "Sit down in his chair, and talk to me until he comes. Oh! you don't know how long the days have been since he went away."

"But I guessed; and that brought me here again, though I saw you yesterday," replied Dorothea, divesting herself of bonnet and shawl, and ensconcing her comfortable face and figure in the master's peculiar chair. "How are you to-night, Lilian?"

"All the better for Robert's letter this morning; that is, quite brisk and blithe."

"You don't look so, fragile little thing; but I suppose one must take your own account of yourself. I have just come from seeing George's wife and her little lass; it has the most comical look of poor old Aunt Kibblewhite you ever saw."

"I have not been to look at it," replied Lilian, in a low, tremulous voice, and with a wistful tear-bright gaze into the fire. "I hope Polly

will not think it unkind in me, Dorothea, but I *could* not."

"No, darling; she does not expect it of you; by and bye you will go."

"Hers is just the age that my baby was when she died. If you will come up-stairs, Dorothea, I have something that I want to send to Polly; perhaps you will take it with my love."

They went up to the spare room, once Mrs. Deborah Eliotson's, and from a shelf of the wardrobe Lilian drew out a beautiful little cloak of sky-blue cachemire, all richly embroidered with silken leaves and flowers by Lilian's own fingers.

"Lucy never wore it," said she, smoothing down the soft folds with a caressing hand; "*her* little things are all here." She opened a drawer and stood looking at the dainty garments made in the midst of such sweet hopes, fitting a tiny shoe upon her finger, thinking such thoughts as never come save to the hearts of mothers of dead children. "When I die, God will give me my darling into my arms again. Oh! surely He will, Dorothea!"

"Never doubt it, Lilian ! don't fret, don't fret; come away."

"A few minutes, Dorothea. Oh, you cannot tell, you cannot tell the pain it was to give her up!" and the bereaved young mother laid her face down, with kisses, and tears, and smothered sobs, on the useless garments that once enfolded the tender limbs of her little one in heaven.

Dorothea had the water in her eyes, too; the baby had been her godchild.

"You must not let Robert find you crying when he comes home, Lilian," she said, at length, to check the flood of grief. "He was very sorry too. He will be tired and worn-out after all this anxiety for Cyrus, and a cheerful face will cheer him most of all."

"He has not had to complain of me. I have tried to be very good, and to keep the tears I could not help for when he was out of sight."

Dorothea lifted up her favourite's face, and kissed her as she used to do when she was only a child, and Lilian found the same consolation in her caresses as formerly. Hers was just the same warm, plastic, clinging, loving heart as ever; Do-

rothea's the same strong, faithful, reliable, comforting heart.

"I like to think, Dorothea, that in heaven will be the carrying on and completing of what is good on earth," Lilian said, as they went down-stairs again. "I think of my mother waiting for my father and me; even sometimes I fancy her with my baby, not much younger than I was when she left me. Is it very foolish to have such a real and human conception of heaven? I cannot help it if it is, Dorothea; and I hope it is not wrong, for it comforts me strangely; when I am alone I fall a-thinking of so many things. If I am rebellious, it comes into my mind: oh, if it had been Robert who had left me, what *should* I have done?"

"Ah, Lilian, when God sends grief, He sends strength to bear it; all of us have sorrow, but not the same sorrow."

"Your life seems to have been singularly free from it, Dorothea."

"We often make that mistake about people whom we think we know the best; but only ourselves can tell where our own shoe pinches."

Lilian was silent for a minute or two, and then she said, very gently—

“I have sometimes wondered, Dorothea, why you never married—so kind and pleasant, and such a favourite, as you always were.”

“Thank you, Lilian: I’ll tell you why; for the simplest reason in the world, because nobody ever asked me. From the beginning I was like my Aunt Kibblewhite—cut out for an old maid.”

“And you are the very dearest and nicest old maid that ever lived,” said Lilian, and this time she kissed Dorothea with that tender compassionate air with which affectionate young wives always regard their single-blessed sisters. Dorothea took it in very good part, and always let herself be patronized by Lilian and her sister-in-law, Polly, as much as ever they liked.

Sitting by the fireside together, they continued their quiet womanly talk at intervals, while the hands of the clock moved round to half-past seven.

“Robert will not be long now; the coach is rarely behind its time,” remarked Dorothea, ap-

plying the poker to the bright lumps of cannel coal, and rousing out a glorious blaze which flooded the old-fashioned room with light.

Lilian went to the window, put aside the curtain, and listened with her ear at the glass. She had not stood there five minutes before she heard the guard sounding his horn, as the Highflyer, with its four reeking horses, dashed up to the Mitre in the Market-place.

"There is the coach coming in; he will be here in ten minutes now," exclaimed Lilian, and away she tripped to Betsy's domains, to watch that the partridges for Robert's supper were being done to a turn, and then up-stairs to his dressing-room to give the fire an inspiriting poke, and to see with her own eyes that the slippers and warm wadded gown, in which he chose to sit at ease when he came off a journey at night, were duly set to air. While she was absent Dorothea Sancton again donned her bonnet and shawl, and was standing ready to depart when Lilian reappeared, her cheeks softly flushed, her eyes brightened, her lips smiling unconsciously; as pretty a picture of a loving expectant little

wife as ever waited yet to welcome anybody home.

"I think you do look better than you did, Lilian," said Dorothea, observing her kindly.

"Oh, yes; I shall soon be quite well and strong again. There's Robert!"

Dorothea had heard nothing, but Lilian had a quick ear for a footstep, and knew *his* a long way off.

She was on the door-step to meet him and bring him in, to kiss his cold face, and disentangle his multitudinous wraps against the early autumnal frosts and east winds, and to make him feel to the innermost core of his heart, that, "be it ever so homely, there's no place like home."

"I have seen nothing so pretty since I went away," said Robert; "nothing half so bright or delightful," taking her glad little face between his two long hands, and returning her warm kisses with interest.

"Where is Dorothea? she was here a minute since!" Lilian cried, when the first greetings were over. "How strange of her to run away—

she must have stolen out when you came in—that is so like Dorothea!”

She was gone, however, out of the room, and out of the house, sure in her own mind that they would never miss her.

“Oh, Robert, you look very tired!” Lilian said, pathetically, when they were by and bye sitting at tea.

“It was a terrible time of anxiety—terrible, Lilian.”

“And poor Cyrus—you saw him to say good-bye?”

“Yes. He shows less sign of having taken his trouble to heart than any of us. Sir Philip Nugent went home really ill.”

“But how will he get through the time, so restless and unquiet as he is?”

“Fall back by and bye on his old occupations, perhaps. Poor Cyr! poor Cyr!”

“Lola has been at Lady Leigh’s: did he ever mention her to you?—the little thing was in dreadful distress.”

“Lola! never a word; what of her?”

"She has known him so long, that she has learnt to love him."

"Cyrus never named her; his situation was so critical as to exclude every other thought."

Lilian made no answer; she was thinking of those sad, tearful eyes that used to look up at her so wistfully for hope and consolation while Cyrus was in danger, and of the faithful little heart in whose depth every pain he suffered thrilled with double force. She felt more indignant against Cyrus for this selfish forgetfulness than for every one of his other follies, extravagances, and errors.

"He will make many a heart ache," said she, after a pause.

Robert had not a word of blame for his brother.

"And he will have many a one to bear," was his response.

"You would pass through Millburn to-day—is it all quiet again?"

"Yes; and black and smoky as usual; everything in the usual train, and the poor martyrs forgotten already."

Simon Hawthorne died at Chinelyn the week after the issue of Cyrus's trial was known, leaving all his money to his second wife, with the exception of a trifle to Robert and his brother, for the purchase of mourning rings. As this disposition of his property had been all along anticipated, it gave no disappointment and produced no ill-feeling.

CHAPTER THE THIRD.

THE COMMON LOT.

"L'éternité est une pendule, dont le balancier dit et redit sans cesse ces deux mots seulement, dans le silence des tombeaux : 'Toujours! jamais!—Jamais! toujours!'"

JACQUES BRIDAINE.

I.

ST. WILFRED'S FAIR that year fell on a magnificent day, and old Nanny Brigget showed herself at her station as usual in the midst of her beautiful baskets of fruit; as usual, too, Dorothea Sancton came to make her early purchases, but this time in very limited quantities. The trade at the little tea-shop failed more and more, the annual dinner was now restricted to three guests, and Dorothea, with all her exact economy, had some difficulty to pay her rent and make both ends meet. Nanny

had now abandoned her matrimonial hints, and asked Dorothea after her brother and sister, her nephew and niece, and friends instead of herself.

“An’ I’ve had young Mrs. Robert Hawthorne already buying a few jargonelles that the old gentleman, her father, is fond of,” said the ancient market-woman, who had a bit of gossiping time on hand, and was willing to employ it; “a very nice and kind-spoken lady she is,—I don’t know of another in the town I’m better pleased to see. But she don’t look as well as she should, or maybe it is the crape bonnet that misbecomes her pretty face.”

“I don’t think she is strong, Nanny, but she has been a good deal tried lately—the death of the old grandfather at Chinelyn, and the anxiety about her brother-in-law, and the loss of her little baby, altogether have been too much for her. But I hope to see her rally soon.”

Nanny shook her head: “I tell you what, Miss Dorothy, she seems to me to be dwining away just as her mother did afore her; and, what’s more, I think Mr. Robert sees it, for he came

along while she was here an' would carry her bit of a basket that a bairn o' five year old might ha' holden wi' one hand, as if he was afeard of her being tired wi' it. They went together to the hill corner, and there she took t' basket herself and went away laughing and nodding at him, and he stood a minute watching her like a man that's forgotten everything else. Anything happen to her people'll be real sorry for him, for he's fairly bound up in her—an' well he may, for she's as good as she's bonnie."

Dorothea stood grave and reflective, without speaking a word, while Nanny went on—"She's so kind to poor folk; I remember her last June when new potatoes was at eightpence an' all the old ones gone, she was buying her week's things o' me when one o' them widows from the almshouses came up wi' her basket an' asked how potatoes was, an' when I telled her, she shook her head, as they was over-dear, and was going away, when Mrs. Robert puts her hand on her old basket an' says, 'Nanny, give her a measure,' an' pays me herself. I've seen her do that kind o' thing oft. You ask Mrs. Brown,

and she'll tell you many's the time Mrs. Robert's come into her shop, an' taken away a couple o' pounds o' good meat for some sick woman in the lane; an' I've met her myself, as I've been going home at night, coming back from seeing that poor lass at Kilham, who got into such sore trouble a while sin', and who, it's my belief, would ha' ended herself afore this but for what Mrs. Robert's done an' said for her. She's quiet over what she's about; but bless you, *we* know; an' I've thought often she's over-good to live long, though it's o' the like of *her* we have need when we're poor an' ill."

Dorothea nodded silently and walked away, but Nanny, looking up at her, saw the great tears rolling down her face.

"Ay," she said to herself, "an' Miss Dorothy sees it too."

Dorothea went in home and arranged herself behind the counter for the day's customers in a very absent, pre-occupied mood. There was a bright sun shining broad over the Market-place, which was all astir with the stall-keepers hanging out their wares, and the great trees about the

Cross waved in majestic shadow above old Nanny and her companions. As Dorothea dreamily watched the familiar scene a thousand times and events floated back over her memory, Lilian, her pretty pet Lilian, vivid in them all; and while she was thus thinking the black clad figure of the young wife passed the window, paused at the door, and came in.

"Just for a five minutes' rest, Dorothea; how are you to-day?" said she, dropping into a chair beside the counter and leaning her elbow on it, while her lips parted breathlessly and her delicate colour came and went like the wavering of sunshine through leaves. "So very little tires me now; I have but been up the Minster Hill to see my father," added she, after a pause, smiling at her weakness.

"Yes, Lilian; you must take care of yourself," replied Dorothea, helplessly. She would have liked to cry, only she dare not.

"Have you seen George since last night?" Lilian asked. "If not, I have news for you."

"Mr. Reuben Otley has consented to his getting a share in the business?" guessed Doro-

thea, brightening. "I am glad of it; it is nothing but right that Robert's will should rule. Polly will be made happy. And how about Mr. Constant?"

"He has a very small share too; that was harder than George's business, but Mr. Reuben Otley yielded at last. And now I have something else to tell; at the end of next month Robert and I are going away again; we are going to where Robert was born, I hope, or, at all events, somewhere near it. Dr. Sandford says it is a warmer climate for the winter, and that it will be good for me."

Dorothea turned away, and found something the matter with one of the tea-chests for ever so long—she could not speak; well she knew what this journey meant; she had heard such sentences of death pronounced before.

"What ails you, Dorothea?" asked Lilian, who divined from her silence that she was crying, "you are out of spirits; is the shop failing you more and more?"

"Yes; that is it," replied Dorothea, eagerly grasping at this pretext for her tears. "I'm sure

I don't know where it will end; but let us go into the parlour, for I'm not fit to be seen if anybody comes in. Jem, mind the shop."

Lilian sat down by the open window in Miss Kibblewhite's great arm-chair, and Mistress Prim came and wagged her tail in sign of welcome. Dorothea moved about restlessly for several minutes, as if she did not know what she was doing, until Lilian, to quiet her, made a commonplace remark on the mignonette having done very well in the garden that year, when she sat down, sighing heavily.

"That is not like you, Dorothea; you used to cheer us all," said Lilian, kindly; "if the shop is failing, we shall not let you go with it."

"I know, Lilian: Lady Leigh has offered me the matron's place amongst her orphans, but I don't like to take it. A year or two since it might have suited me, but now I feel as if I were getting out of children's ways."

"Oh, Dorothea! you can never get out of kind and loving ways as long as you live. I think you would be very happy there."

"Ah! well, Lilian, we never know! The

winter will be dull enough without you and Robert."

"But it will soon be over; you must not dwell on that; you have Polly to look after, and I must see her before we go."

They were both quiet for a minute or two, until the rustling of silk in the shop, and a beautiful voice, asking, "Is Miss Sancton within?" caused Dorothea to spring up and quit the parlour. Lilian recognized young Lady Nugent's manner of speaking, and the pretty lisp of her little daughter, who accompanied her.

"We have come to buy fairings, have we not, Sylvie?" said Lady Nugent; "and to ask Dorothea to let us sit in her window this afternoon, when we have dined with grandma."

"Yeth, Doddotea, is 'our 'itte dod here? I want to see her."

And in quest of Prim in toddled a small fairy in white muslin, blue sash, and golden curls. Lady Nugent followed to coax her back, and stopped a few minutes to speak to Lilian.

"I am sorry to hear your own health is delicate," she said, gently; "Lady Leigh tells me

you are to seek change for the winter. I hope it will be of benefit to you." She moved away with a gracious bow, then came back, offered her hand, and finally her lips. "You are much changed, Lilian," said she, and her soft blue eyes looked for a moment as if there were tears in them; "but you will get well soon, we hope."

When she was gone Dorothea remarked that Lady Nugent's manner was very uncertain. "She is quite the great lady one moment, and the next she kisses you like a sister." Lilian gave no reply: perhaps she understood Lady Nugent better than Dorothea did.

"Now I must go home,—Robert will think me an idle little gad-about;" said she, by and bye; "but I like the fresh morning air; it gives me more strength for the day. What a useless creature I am becoming in the world!" They passed through into the shop, and just at the moment Robert came in sight. Jem was sent to call him in, that Dorothea might thank him for her brother, and Lilian would then have had him go on his business, whatever it was, but he said, no, not until he had taken her home. It was well

she had his arm to lean on. More eyes than Dorothea's watched her sorrowfully as she went, sad to see the feeble and weary slowness of the little feet that were taking some of their last steps on a road which God had made so smooth and bright for them that they might well reluctantly linger unwilling to leave it.

II.

Perhaps to those around her one of the most pathetic features of Lilian's state was her own apparent utter unconsciousness of anything seriously amiss. She was always to be better on the morrow, if she could be induced to acknowledge herself not very well to-day, but generally her answer to all inquiries was brisk and cheerful; and those to whom she was most dear felt obliged to be cheerful too, to maintain the innocent delusion.

Dr. Sandford had been again consulted by Lady Leigh, but he did not stir from his first verdict. Lilian's disease was mortal—its issue

was only a question of time, of a few months, more or less—according to the rapidity of its progress. Robert and Dorothea knew this immediately it was suggested that she should be taken into the south for the winter, and what Robert was obliged secretly to suffer in the anticipation of this inevitable grief no tongue can tell. They kept it from her father, who, though he had watched every deadly symptom of consumption wasting his own nearest and dearest once before, seemed mercifully blinded to the fate which was hanging over his daughter. He spent many evenings in Maiden Lane during the last month that they were at home, just as happy and easily pleased as ever; he was rather dismal at the prospect of a winter without either Robert or her, but always wound up his grievance with a pleasant looking forward to the spring, when they would come back with Lilian, please God, quite well.

Lady Leigh and both the Ladies Nugent visited her several times, and once came Sir Philip himself with his little daughter Sylvie by the hand carrying a present of fresh grapes. Robert on this occasion saw his father alone for a long while;

a better feeling had been established between them since Cyrus fell into trouble, but Robert's circumstances were such now as to make Sir Philip's profuse offers of help unnecessary. Poor Lady Leigh's black brows almost met over her eyes whenever she saw her old favourite—she always frowned dreadfully when she was afraid of betraying any emotion—and on one of these occasions she gave Lilian a piece of information which seemed unnecessary and startling at the time, but which afterwards she came to look upon in a different light.

“I have been putting a codicil to my will,” said she, abruptly; “and I have left your father an annuity for his life that will make him easy if he should ever have to leave the Minster.”

“Oh! Lady Leigh, has he not Robert and myself?” cried Lilian, surprised, and rather grieved at what seemed implied.

“There is no harm done, my dear, we never can tell what may happen, and I thought it would please you to know that he was well provided for; now let us talk of something else; don't be grateful! I cannot bear it!” The old lady's manner

was harsher and more peremptory than usual, and, not being able to control it, she went home; those who did not know her might have thought her in a dreadful fit of ill-humour, but Lilian knew she was only in distress at losing her.

Two or three days before they were to go, Dorothea Sancton went down to Maiden Lane and found Lilian "setting her house in order." A capital little housekeeper she had always been since her beginning, with such tidy store closets, and such ingenious contrivances for domestic thrift and comfort as are the real delight of many women. Betsy was in attendance on her, listening to directions and surreptitiously wiping away her tears. Dorothea felt sorely inclined to sympathize with her.

"What are you crying about? don't cry, Betsy, but attend to what I am showing you," Lilian said, touching one of the servant's rough red arms very kindly. Betsy sobbed and fixed her glazed eyes on the great linen chest, in a compartment of which Lilian was pointing out the reserve of lint and old linen for any poor body who needed them in case of accidents, and bundles of clothes

duly folded and ticketed that were to be given away at Christmas.

"I would have asked you to do this for me, Dorothea, and to take charge of the mothers' basket which Fanny Rabbits has just now, but I think it will be a little amusement for Betsy," Lilian began to say when the sobs became audible. "But if she wants any help or direction, you will let her come to you?"

There is nothing pathetic in preserves, pickles, or miscellaneous grocery stores, but as Lilian opened her many-shelved closets and told Betsy which were to be used in her absence, which were to be given away, and which were to be spared, Dorothea could have cried aloud. When the young mistress had finished her task, she paused a moment, and then said, in a very low but steady voice,—

"And, Betsy, if I should *not* come home with your master in the spring, you must tell him what we have been used to do for Widow Mary and the rest; mind they have their quarters of a pound of tea regularly, for they think so much of it. Remember, Betsy, I trust you."

For all answer Betsy cast her checked apron over her head and cried more bitterly than ever.

"It is so foolish to cry, Betsy," said Lilian, reprovingly; "I am afraid you will forget half of what I have been telling you."

"No, missis; that I shan't!"

"Then be a reasonable girl. I have told her she is to have her sister in the house while we are away, so she need not feel dull."

"Missis, you are walking and talking yourself off your feet!" exclaimed Betsy, in a sudden outbreak of temper behind her screen; "Miss Dorothy, will you take an' make her lie down."

"Come into the old nursery, Dorothea; the sun shines in there so pleasantly of an afternoon," Lilian proposed, and thither accordingly they adjourned.

This was the last time Lilian and Dorothea had a long talk together. It was a very fine September day, and the far-off woods were already tinged with russet in the declining sun.

"Next year at this time!" exclaimed Lilian, looking over to them wistfully.

"Next year at this time, if it please God, all will be well," replied Dorothea, with a quiver in her voice.

"I hope so, Dorothea; it would be a sad blow to Robert if he were to lose me, and I am so happy that life is become very dear to me," said Lilian, solemnly. "I see you looking all of you sorrowful though you try to hide it; but I do not feel *very* ill—I am sure I pray God not to part us so soon; though what I have been doing to-day seemed as if I were making ready to leave it all, and come home no more."

"My darling, darling! if it makes you sad, do not let us talk about it;" and Dorothea went down on her knees and encircled Lilian in her arms.

"*If* it makes me sad! oh! Dorothea, have I not what would make it hard to die? and it *does* make me sad, for I want to stay with Robert. I remember one time when I should have been rather more glad to die than live, but that was when I was not happy; but I do think, and hope, and pray that I may be spared yet awhile."

"I am not wise, Lilian; I can't feel and talk

about these solemn things as some do, but don't you agree with me that it is right to say 'God's will be done,' and to try to believe that, whatever it proves to be, that will be better than our own?"

"Yes; it is *right*, Dorothea, but it is not always easy."

"Not easy at first, but though it may be hard at the time, afterwards I think we generally see that it was best not only for those who are gone before, but for those also who are left behind. I felt it very much giving up Aunt Kibblewhite, but often I am thankful now, for if she had lived with the business falling off, as it had begun to do, we must have separated, and she would have had to come to poverty—a thing she had never known in all her life."

Lilian made no answer to this, perhaps she did not see the justice of the parallel; she fixed her soft eyes upon the distant river, glancing amidst the fields, and thought of Robert, of her lost child, of her unknown mother, of her poor old father, who had nobody but her. Lilian was quite right in saying she had much to live for,

and that it was hard to leave it all, even were it God's pleasure. It is beyond human vision to see the why and because of the separations death makes between those who love each other, and our hearts cannot always acquiesce religiously in the almighty act. We do not perceive the need for it—we can only quiver and sob over our bleeding wound, and be patient until time stanches it; some time perhaps, if not here, then elsewhere, we shall learn to see clearly, and to acknowledge that the very act that seemed most meaningless and needless in the passing, was the key of a blest future, the opening to us of the treasures of a merciful and tender God. But of all the speculations that bewilder us while we are disentangling our clue of life, there are none more vain, none more hopeless of solution, than those which tempt us to question Providence of the reason of this or that event; when we have rebelled and striven our hardest—when we have mourned through the days of darkness, and risen up again under the burden that has been laid upon us—the only staff that is strong enough to help us forward—the sweetest draught

of consolation we can take—is still in turning to the place where we might have found both at first, and saying, as poor Dorothea suggested, “God’s will be done!”

III.

On a morning very bright and warm for the time of year, Lilian and Robert left their home. Smiling and cheerful to the last, she left a kindly recollection on all who assembled at the door in Maiden Lane to say good-bye. Peter Carlton and Dorothea were there, and Betsy, incapable with crying; Mr. Reuben Otley and his poor, twisting, uncomfortable nephew, John, who had the humiliated affection of a despised and beaten turnspit for Robert and his wife; George Sancton, and Mr. Constant, and Polly, and Nanny Brigget, in a fever of hurry, with four peaches in a straw basket lined with leaves, and a great bunch of grapes to refresh Lilian on her journey. Lady Leigh’s cloak was in requisition, and Lilian’s pale, languid face shone against it as a

white rose shines in a cup of dusky leaves. So many hand-shakings, and kisses, and last words, had to be exchanged, that poor Robert looked quite wan and distressed long before they were over, but he could not bear to hurry her away, especially from poor Peter, whose anticipations of their return were loudly and frequently expressed.

But at last they were off, Lilian waving her little hand to the top of the lane, where stood Widow Mary and another old woman, to curtsy their respectful wishes for her coming home again. As they went by the corner where the sculptor's shop was, John stopped his chisel, looked out furtively and shook his grey head, as though he would say he did not hope to see *her* ever again; and coming to Lady Leigh's garden door, there was she leaning on her stick, with her sister and Mistress Alice Johnes, and Hilton, and Sempronius in the background. Lady Leigh put up her face to be kissed for the only time that Lilian had ever seen it wet with tears, but scarcely a word was said, and as the chaise drove on again, Lilian, sighing, exclaimed—

"I am glad it is over, Robert; I don't like these good-byes." Not immediately receiving an answer, she bent forward to look at his face, which was half turned away, and saw that it was all moved and a-quiver with pain. "Robert!" said she, laying her hand softly on his, "Robert, what is the matter?"

"I think," replied he, brushing something from his eyes, "I was touched to see how much of tender love my little wife had won."

He drew the warm cloak close about her, and made her rest upon his arm, where she by and bye fell asleep, rather weary with the last hour's excitement; leaving to him the mournful contemplation of her dear face, which, when the play of expression was still, the eyes closed, the tender lips folded and mute, showed the pale ravages of mortality the more sadly. Its exquisite, flower-like loveliness was faded, but to Robert's eyes it was as the face of an angel.

The early autumnal day shone over their journey until they stopped for the night at a quiet country inn, about whose porch there was

a grand clustering of honeysuckle and late-blooming roses.

“When we are rich enough, Robert, you and I must live in a flowery cottage something like this—shall we?” said Lilian, laughing, as she went into the low arched passage, from which opened on either side a homely parlour, whose window-sills were filled with plants. “I have often thought I should like to live in a cottage near Redbank, where we could see the river and the fields, and have a garden like a little cup full of flowers; should you like it, Robert?”

Robert said he should like it very much, and, though his thoughts must have been with quite different issues, he encouraged her to talk of this happy future: I believe they even settled the exact spot where the little Elysium was to be, designed it, grew a grove of trees about it, and pictured themselves living there up to a tranquil old age—all in that single evening before they went to rest.

IV.

Robert Hawthorne would have preferred the Manor Farm to any other place, as a temporary home for Lilian, but at the death of his grandfather, it had passed into quite strange hands, so he took lodgings in a pretty thatched cottage, which was nestled in a sunny hollow of the land-slip at Arbon. There was a garden round it, in which, to Lilian's admiration, flourished plants such as hitherto she had only seen tendered in greenhouses: fuchsias grown into trees, as high as the cottage; hydrangeas and myrtles in luxuriant bushes. An interval of deliciously soft and warm weather followed their arrival, during which she could sit under the rustic verandah, and watch the sea, and the ships, and the play of the clouds, in indolent calm enjoyment. It was all new to her; pleasant, beautiful, tranquillizing, revivifying too, like the beginning of a new life. She rallied so amazingly for a little while, that Robert took heart, and in his earlier letters home, gave

everybody hope that she would ere long be perfectly restored.

It was such happiness to him to believe it! They used to take walks together amongst the fairy wildness of the landslip, over towards Winchcombe, where the summer seemed to be still lingering, loth to quit so much loveliness at the warnings of chill autumnal winds that night and morning breathed over the downs. Often, too, Lilian was able for a longer excursion, and then a shaggy black pony, named Brisk, belonging to the mistress of the house, was put into requisition. Brisk was a well-meaning, though sometimes wilful little fellow, and carried her up and down the hills, with Lady Leigh's cloak about her, many and many a sunny day, accommodating his moods to hers with singular amiability; it was not every one that Brisk would allow to go near him, but he took a great fancy to Lilian's pleasant voice and caressing hand, and let her mount him whenever she liked. Perhaps one or two of Lilian's own letters will give the fullest and clearest account of this period. The first I shall choose is to Dorothea Sancton:—

“DEAREST DOE,

“It is Sunday afternoon, and Robert has left me to go to church, by which you will know that I am very well to-day—I am *wonderful*, I believe you would hardly know me, though we have only been here a fortnight. It is a pretty place—I cannot tell you how pretty, but I am not sure that I should like it, for a continuance, as well as the wilder and bolder outlines of our northern country. But there are bits like fairy-land—lovely little vignettes that I should delight in showing to you. And there is the sea—the sea that is always beautiful! Robert thinks there can be nothing in the world to equal it, but we have neither of us been great travellers, you know, and ought to be modest in giving our opinion. I must tell you where we have been—but first, let me introduce Brisk. Brisk is a pony, black, rough, crusty, and of a very independent mind, but by letting him go at his own pace, and occasionally stop for five minutes to botanize in the hedge-row, I have succeeded in establishing a perfect understanding with him. Wrapped up in Lady Leigh’s old cloak, and

perched on my little friend's broad back—he is absurdly fat—I have been over the down, from the top of which, as it was a most glorious day, we had a view so rich, and sweet, and varied, that I despair of describing it to you. Will you try to fancy it from my bald outlines? Fancy a wide grassy sweep all round, melting into sloping fields, divided by hedges and belts of wood, a wide valley softened with dim haze, dotted with villages and churches, and lines of distant hills, with white chalk patches breaking their uniform darkness. Beyond them the blue sea-line, and the Hampshire coast—on every side the beautiful sea, as still and blue that day as any of our lakes that we have up in the north. I think Robert could almost have gone down on his knees and kissed the ground, he seems to love it so. I was very tired when we got home, but the day after was quite equal to another ride, and we went to Chinelyn, where we dined at the rectory. Oh, Dorothea! did you ever see a woman who seemed to you without one selfishness, one hardness, one vanity? Mrs. Ford is such a woman; she is *good*: I never thought any

one could be so loving and perfect as she is. The dearest face, very frail and delicate, suffering even, but pure and sweet—I should wish to be like her, if it were possible, but it is not. I believe what gives her this angelic loveliness, is that her mind is far more in heaven than on earth. And yet she is so kind to all about her, patient and charitable, and not in the least bigoted, as I have sometimes felt very good people were; she is severe for herself, but most tenderly considerate to all others. It will be good for me, whether I am to live or die, that I have known her. She comes to see me often, and talks to me so that I could listen for ever—she is the only person I ever knew who seemed to anticipate and realize the blessed hopes we have given us in our Lord; I cannot feel them near to my heart as she does, but when I tell her so, she just kisses me and says, “They will come to you in His good time,” and always leaves me feeling lifted up, and happier in my mind, and with more resigned thoughts if it should be, indeed, that Robert and I must part. I like the rector too, but in his goodness there is a little of that austerity that

awes me. Mrs. Ford took me down the Chine, which is pretty, but not so grand as I used to imagine from Robert's descriptions, and I saw besides the old schoolhouse, and the Manor Farm at a distance, but I was not permitted to go to it that day for fear of being over-tired: I must tell you more about them, and about my funny little doctor, the next time I write. My kind love to all who inquire for me, and I am improving nicely. How does Betsy manage without us? she is a good girl, and was very thoughtful for me. I shall leave my letter open for Robert to add a few lines when he comes home; and now good bye.

"Your affectionate

"LILIAN HAWTHORNE."

Robert's postscript was merely a brief repetition of the great amendment there was already in Lilian's looks and health.

The next letter, written to her father, is not quite so promising.

“ MY DEAR FATHER,

“ ROBERT has written you more at length than I feel quite equal to to-day, but I cannot let his letter go without a little scrap from me. I was very glad to hear that Lady Leigh had visited you to exhibit my last letter to her, though there was nothing in it that I had not already told you, because I know the kindness would please you: Robert says you must not trouble yourself with poor John Otley, but I know it is not a trouble to you to be kind to anybody who is unhappy, and I think he has no friends that care for him besides ourselves; I feel so very, very sorry for him, and I think, after he has conducted himself so well during the last four years, and shown himself always grateful to Robert, his early crime should be passed out of remembrance as much as possible. I hope his uncle will take him into his house again by and bye. It has been spoken of amongst us more than once, but the old man does not easily relent or forget the disgrace. My last excursion with Master Brisk was along the Undercliff to St. Leonard's. There is a tiny church there that I think could be put entire into your organ-loft,

and by the wayside a well of delicious cold spring-water—I wished it had been some fairy well which would at a draught have renewed my strength. These are real November days just now, chill and raw with east winds, but also with sunny gleams about noon. I am to keep indoors, however, my little doctor says, and Robert will have me obedient. My doctor is clever, and good, and kind, but I should not like to have to rely on him in an emergency, for he never visits a patient except in full dress, and with his whiskers curled like the finest roll of a coachman's state wig—at least, so our little gossip says, and from my own observation it must be true. Robert has twice tried to take the pen out of my hand, so now, dear, dear father, I must say good-bye and put it down. I am *better* than I was when I left home, but not *quite* so well as during our first fortnight here.”

December was a fine open month, and about Christmas there were a few days like a foretaste of the spring. Lilian had fallen back fast and fatally; for that brief rallying of her strength had

proved delusive. At this time she wrote again to Dorothea, and there is a sensible change in her tone of expression ; she who had been loving and gentle always becomes humble and clinging in her affection.

“ DEAREST DOROTHEA,

“ I HAVE not written to any one for a week, but to-day Robert does not forbid ; so after a little letter to my father I will write another for you. How am I ? you ask in your last. No better,—not much worse ; I suffer sometimes, and then I revive, but not for long. I begin to think sometimes I shall never see Walton, or my father, or any of you, any more, and then I wish I had never left you. It is rather sad to me to think I may die away from home, and not be buried where my baby is—I dare not say so to any one but you. Oh ! I think Robert will almost break his heart ! He is so good and watchful over me—I blame myself that I have never been able to love him enough, or to show him how I loved him. And who will comfort my poor, poor father ? But if it is to be, I will try to say what you told me,

Dorothea, though it is hard, very hard, even yet. You don't know how dear and precious you all seem to me—even some for whom I did not care much before—now that we are, perhaps, near to part. Latterly, I have seen Mrs. Ford almost every day; she never comes but she comforts me; when she is with me we send Robert out for a walk, otherwise he will not leave me for a moment. Yesterday, while he was out, she began to tell me what a lovely character his mother was, and many little things about her that I liked to hear, because I recognized in them something that was like my Robert. When he came in, he brought some primroses that he had gathered in a sunny hollow of the landslip. I was so foolish I could not help crying over them—oh! Dorothea! the primroses on Redbank and the violets in the copse, am I never to see them any more? I have not been out now for ten days, but to-morrow Robert promises me a little walk in the garden when the sun shines.”

This letter ends abruptly with two words from Robert, who had stopped the writer, signed, folded,

and directed it himself. These little tyrannies he had to exercise often, for Lilian always would do too much when she got leave to do anything.

“DEAR BETSY,

“THE account you wrote us of how you go on at home pleased your master and myself very much. I should like you to walk to Kilham and tell Jane Dawson how glad I am she has got a place again; you may go to Harvey’s and choose a warm winter shawl for yourself, which I give you for a new-year’s gift, and at the same time get one for Jane; I fear she is not very respectably clothed, but as she goes only into a plain service she will not need such things as formerly. Tell her that I am glad her mother will keep the boy, and you must carry a little of something to her—a parcel of tea and some rice; if the child is in need of a little frock and cape, give Jane my plaid woollen dress to make up for him; I shall never wear it any more. No, dear Betsy, I feel now that I said good-bye to you all for the last time, and that it is not the will of God that I should ever return home again. When your

master comes home, he will be alone, so I hope, dear Betsy, you will be very good to him; there are many little things for his comfort that I used to attend to which will then rest with you—I am sure you will remember them. I feel very sorry often to leave you all, but it is only for a little time, and then we shall meet where there are no more partings. I hope you will be happy, whether you go to a home and husband of your own by and bye, or whether you spend your life in service; I have to thank you, which I do from my heart, for your faithful service to me from the day your master brought me home after we were married; it will be a comfort to you now to remember that ever since then you have been a comfort to me, especially when Lucy died; and I have never forgotten the white violets you went through the wet to gather in the copse to lay on her innocent breast. I did not think then that I should see her so soon again. For a keepsake in memory of me I will send you my little old Bible, in which I have marked some verses for you to read. When you read them, I think they will, perhaps, make you feel as if I were not gone so very far away. Give

my love to Widow Mary and the rest, and don't grieve, dear Betsy; and think of your master as I have told you.

“Your affectionate mistress,

“LILIAN HAWTHORNE.”

This was the last letter Lilian ever wrote. Until the day before, she had been left in the hopeful uncertainty which was incidental to her disease; and everybody about her, Robert especially, had dissimulated their fears. Oh, what he suffered when he saw that he must give her up! His whole heart rose insurgent against the cruel decree; why was his life to be deprived of the glory of her love? Heaven *might* have let him keep her—she was *all* he had!

“I am very young, and we have been so happy, Robert!” she said to him, one evening, almost weeping; “why must I die?” It was such a pitiful question—“We have been so happy, Robert; *why* must I die?”

He kissed away her tears, and said perhaps God would spare her to him, and even to that *perhaps* she clung with revived hope. Mrs. Ford thought

it was wrong to deceive her, for each day now saw some swifter failing in her little strength—any hour the messenger from Heaven might come. One afternoon she had been into the sunny shelter of the garden for a few minutes, and when she came in and was laid down on the couch she almost fainted. Mrs. Ford was there at the time, and after she revived Robert left them together and went down upon the windy shore where a turbid sea was rolling heavily in. Twilight fell ere he returned; Mrs. Ford was then gone, and Lilian was alone; it was almost dark in the room, but the fire gave out a ruddy glow, by which he saw a peaceful expression on her unconscious face, for she had fallen into a quiet sleep. As he drew near and leant over her she woke and opened her eyes with a smile—he perceived at once a change in her.

As he knelt down beside her she put one of her frail little hands round his neck and whispered, in a hushed and solemn voice, "Oh, Robert, Robert, I am going to leave you——"

"Lilian!"

"Ah! Robert, you knew and never told me!

I am very sorry ; we have been so happy, and I loved you so."

Robert hid his face upon her breast ; already, *already* she thought of this happiness and this love as of things passed away.

"Nay, Robert, don't cry, don't cry—" but she mingled her tears with his.

Ah ! me, what depths of unavailing tenderness there lie in human hearts ! depths that are never plumbed until the heavy millstone of a great grief is dropped into them by the hand of God, and the eddies that widen and spread to the verge of the shores of life settle back into silence and stillness as it sinks down into the darkness where no light penetrates but the love of our Father in Heaven !

V.

It appeared that the certainty of her approaching death gave Lilian calmness and strength. The day after she wrote short farewell letters to her father, to Lady Leigh, to Dorothea, and that longer one to

Betsy which has been given. Mr. and Mrs. Ford visited her again, and when they were gone she lay down, and Robert sat by her holding one of her hands : she dozed for half an hour or more, opening her eyes at intervals to smile at him and see that he was still there. As it was darkening she began to speak to him of many things, of her father, of Lady Leigh, and every one whom she loved.

"I wish I had died at home," said she by and bye ; "I should have liked to be buried in the churchyard with wee Lucy, where now and then you could have come to look on my grave. Where will they bury you, Robert, when you die, I wonder ?"

"I shall think of you in heaven, Lilian, not here."

"But you will not forget my grave—it will be beside your mother's."

"Oh ! my darling, peace !"

"Poor Robert !"

Three days later, about the same hour, Mrs. Ford was with them again, and the good woman went away comforted, and told her husband that it

had rejoiced her heart to see that Lilian could think and speak now of something besides Robert! the strong ties of human love were being gently loosened by the winning of the love almighty.

All that night Robert sat and watched; it was a night without moon or stars, and he heard the sighing of the waves on the shore all through its stillness. Lilian slept much and seemed not suffering but unconscious, even when her shadowy eyes opened upon his face. Death was in the room with him then, waiting the supreme moment.

Towards morning she looked up with a flash of intelligence, half lifted the hand lying white upon her breast and said, "Oh! Robert, the light is coming;" and ere it fell the light was come!

CHAPTER THE FOURTH.

THE DAYS OF MOURNING.

"BREAK, break, break,
 At the foot of thy crags, O sea,
 But the tender grace of a day that is dead
 Will never come back to me."

TENNYSON.

I.

THEY buried Lilian one showery February afternoon in the pretty little churchyard where Robert's mother lay—only a sod divided the two graves. The service over, priest and people gone, Robert, in a stupor of sorrow, flung himself beside it bitterly weeping. To leave her—*her* whom his love could never guard too tenderly—alone in the rain and the cold, alone with the heavy earth upon her breast,—ah! it was cruel, cruel! How sweet, how lovely, how gentle, she had been! how good and thoughtful always for others, how

most dear and precious of all to him! No more sweet kisses, no more soft, loving, petulant words; where the sunshine of her youth and happiness had been, nothing more for ever but a cold, blank silence.

He had a dream that night, in which he saw her as he saw her once long ago, gathering posies in Lady Leigh's garden; she had a child by one hand, and a great heap of many-hued blossoms gathered up in the other arm; her face was happy, and she went on step by step culling others, until he lost sight of her in a thick grove, where he thought he could hear her begin to sing as she disappeared. Every sense stretched towards the voice dying in the distance, he awoke—awoke to find himself alone, and no sound but the waves breaking on the shore in the gray of the morning. He sprang up and went away to look at the grave again, and found it covered with a white frost. Oh! could the pure spirit in heaven hear the sad outcry of his bereaved heart?

What sorrow was like this sorrow, what loss like this loss? His whole life stripped of its

joy! If the passionate grief overcame the long obedience, the One who has tasted human suffering and carried the remembrance of it to heaven will plead his pardon; it is not for us, weak, less tried, or less feeling, to condemn such anguish as a blind rebellion. God knows, and only God must judge!

Everything in his vision had taken a strange dimness and unreality: death often spreads this veil between us and life, while the first solemnity of his visit is upon us; and how hard and repulsive are the outlines of our existence when it is withdrawn! Robert went back to see Brisk looking over the garden hedge from his paddock for the bits of bread Lillian used to send him out at breakfast time; to see a sheaf of letters lying on the table; to hear that Dr. Warley had stopped on his way to a patient to inquire after him; to see, in fact, the life that was yet to be lived already claiming him from the life that was closed. He fed the pony, which pressed its head against his arm, and turned its wilful eye towards the window for the pretty face that was not peeping out at him any more; he glanced over his letters

(one of them contained tidings of the sudden death of Lady Leigh), and read one or two without any impression of their sense; he ate his tasteless meal, and thought of the day that was before him.

In all the vigour, courage, and beauty of his being, his days scarcely at their meridian, and yet all their inexpressible grace and charm gone, the future stretched long before him, but the hopes that once he had woven about it were all vanished like the bright dew from the morning grass. In this future he would nobly bear his part, toiling and waiting and looking forward; but it had no more sweet scenes of happy love, no sunny hours of perfect content, where he could wish the day to stand still. He knew what he had lost, and felt it in all its intense bitterness.

Mr. Ford visited him that afternoon, and Robert walked back to Chinelyn with him to see his wife. In returning home he loitered long by the way, passing his life in calm review.

There was a wan mist over the down, the bare black plantations were softened in outline by it;

the antique grace of the elms that bordered the roadway, and the long drooping boughs of the great ash-trees pencilled against the sky, had a weird majesty of aspect in the haze. The road bridged over the chine, and he stopped there, leaning over the mossy old stone wall, and looking down upon the babbling rivulet, whose broken stony banks were draperied by a luxuriance of fern, and shadowed by tall slender shoots of birch and hazel. What a sweet spot this had once been to him ! what a sweet spot it was still ! He stood there so long gazing on the long enamelled leaves that clung to every clod and rock, that the mist hanging over the uplands came down upon them too, and they were dim. Turning his head he could see the great thatched barns, the gray walls and steep roof of the old Manor, where he had lived as a lad. He had promised to bring Lilian there some day, and show her his mother's room, but the time and the opportunity had never come, and *now* it was too late. He went down to the fold-yard gate and looked across it ; there were some young oxen trampling knee-deep in the straw, some

corpulent black pigs rooting, and a fine liver-and-white dog dozing, with his muzzle on his paws and one eye open at the door of the cart-horses' stable. Robert was seized with a longing to walk over the old house, and, crossing the farmyard, he entered the garden—the bonny, shady garden where Cyrus and his mother and he had had such happy times. The great stone vases were still there, with the heavy golden moss thick-clothing their rims; snowdrops in white lines, primroses in red, and purple, and yellow tufts, just where Mary Hawthorne planted them; and the scented violets in the nooks about the door where the sun shone warm as May in genial winter days.

He stood upon the steps of the door some time before he ventured to knock, and when he did, it was long in being opened; but at length a short, comely-faced woman appeared, and gave him admittance, though she said it was not customary for strangers to wish to see the house—indeed, there was nothing in it worth the trouble. Robert scarcely heard her as he followed through the chill, heavily-wainscoted best rooms—well he

remembered them; distinctly his memory re-peopled them with the gone-by generation of his early life. Almost he expected to hear Cyrus's imperative voice, calling up the wide old stair-way, and his mother responding to her favourite son from her little room looking over to the sea.

"These are what were the state apartments, sir, when the lords of the manor lived in the house themselves," said the mistress.

Robert started out of his reverie.

"There is another room to the east that I should like to see," he replied, absently.

"We don't use it ourselves. You know the house then, sir?"

"I was born here—my mother died in that room."

"Sir, you shall see it."

Up the six sunken steps into the dear little old room! The mist was in there too, but he could just see that it was the same; the same paper on the walls, the little swing bookcase hanging in the recess, and out of the window that glorious view of down, and glen, and wood, and ever-living

sea, on which the fading eyes of his darling mother had looked with never-fading love. The mistress of the house stood outside the door until he came out, and then silently followed him downstairs. She remembered him now as Robert Hawthorne, and had heard at the parsonage that he had just lost his young wife; but she made no allusion to either circumstance, and merely said, with great kindness, as he was going away—

“If you are remaining in the neighbourhood, sir, and would like to come in the garden at any time, you are quite free to do so.”

Robert shook his head, thanked her, and walked away.

It was almost dark by the time he had recrossed the down, but he went up the rugged lane by the church to look at Lilian's grave again before seeking the light of fire and candle, and the warm house-shelter for himself. And once more, when the moon was up and the stars shining in the sky, and again while the morning was gray and chill, day by day and night by night his steps continually directed themselves thither, until, when his tall dark figure and woe-worn face

came in sight, the poor folks would look away that he might not feel himself observed, and say to each other wonderingly, How he must have loved her. He was in no haste to be gone from the place—in no haste to put away the remembrance of his love, his loss, and his sorrow. The grass was growing green upon her grave, and the white rosebuds trailing over it and the little headstone, before he could gird up his mind to go back to the labour and trouble of the homely life which her love would never cheer or brighten more!

II

Robert did not warn his people when he should return, but one evening, when Dorothea Sancton was sitting behind her counter, she saw him crossing the Market-place, and cried out—

“Surely that is Robert Hawthorne!”

Her brother George had come in to talk over her affairs with her and saw him too.

“Ay,” said he, “it is a sorrowful coming home for him, poor fellow! What would become of

me if I lost Polly? We won't let him see us, Doe, for by his coming back without letting us know, he wants to be alone at first, and no wonder."

"Poor Robert!" murmured Dorothea, and she could give no more thought to anything concerning herself that night.

Betsy started when her master appeared at his own door, but she looked a sorrowful welcome at him as he came in and entered the parlour. Every day she had set it in order, dusted and arranged in its customary place each little nick-nack that had been appropriated to Lilian's use as if she were coming back any hour. Robert looked round, and then sat down gravely abstracted. Betsy thought he seemed as if he were listening for something. She left him to himself and went to prepare tea for him, carefully remembering her dear young mistress's requests: when she brought it in to him he ate and drank, indeed, but very sparingly, and as soon as it had fallen dark he left the house.

He went up the Minster hill and across the churchyard to Peter Carlton's. As he drew near he heard the old man making his solemn music

on the organ, and saw the lamp dimly shining through the small-paned window. Tibbie let him go upstairs alone, and he had been a minute or two in the room before the organist was aware of it. But a sudden movement caused him to look round, and when he saw who his visitor was he got up trembling and came to him with both hands stretched out, crying—

“We have lost her, Robert; we have lost her!” in a heart-broken tone.

They sat down and talked of her—her grace, goodness, beauty—her every charm, her peculiar lovingness which had made her the centre of life to both of them; which withdrawn left everything so blank and joyless.

“They would not let me come to her; they said it was better not, and I should have been too late,” Peter said, mournfully. “There was her little letter of farewell, and two days after there was yours. My Lady Leigh had sent to ask if I had news that very morning, and when the messenger got home another servant met him at the door and told him that his old mistress had dropped and died without a word; so the

grief of hearing that our Lily was gone was spared her. She was a woman whom many will miss, and I believe she loved Lily as if she were a child of her own."

The old man seemed, presently, less depressed than Robert had anticipated: he could talk of other things; of the handsome annuity Lady Leigh had left him, and of the journey into Italy which he designed to take.

"Now *she* is gone, nothing binds me here any longer. I have no kinsfolk but you, and you will spare me. I feel as if I were going *home* in going to Italy, and I think I shall stay and spend my days there. It is a complete end and break-up of my past life to have no more of Lilian—if I were to stop here, I should mope and die too. I have only waited thus long for your coming home."

Perhaps it is merciful that old age feels its bereavements less acutely than the strength of youth. Poor Peter, in the late fulfilment of a long-cherished vision, found some interest yet in his declining life sufficient to contest the possession of his thoughts with his great loss.

It was not so with Robert. He went back to his solitary home, feeling that death had taken from him his one little ewe-lamb and made him poor indeed; no one had loved her, and no one could miss her like him.

III.

But the burden of the day must be again taken upon his shoulders; man does not mourn as one without hope. In a little while he was again active in his business, frequent in the street, late in the office: life and the world tread their monotonous round much the same whether we are sad or glad; it seems strange to us that they should do so, strange and unfeeling, but the course of nature is inevitable and we submit.

Little incidents took place in Robert's home which slowly changed its aspect. Betsy, who was a modest, good-looking young woman, married a workman in the manufactory, and removed to a cottage of her own, and Dorothea Sancton grate-

fully took the same post of housekeeper to her friend Robert which Mrs. Deborah Eliotson had formerly held to his uncle. The transference was very quietly made, and Dorothea was as suitable to her office as if each had been made for the other. Robert Hawthorne liked her kind sisterly companionship, and very soon they were as much used to each other as if they had lived together for years.

But he was very different from what he had been; a deep-feeling heart does not soon rally from a sorrow like his. In some lives, there comes a point where one event seems to build up a partition wall between the past and the present; from whence the eye can look straight through the future to the end of the course. It appears then, that there are no more great convulsions to dread, nothing that can again stir the heart to its foundations. Other bereavements, losses, poverty, or riches may intervene, but it is not such as these that change the face of the earth, like the inner revolution of which I speak—this point came to Robert Hawthorne when Lilian died.

He came home to Walton Minster utterly broken and weighed down by his grief; he was scarcely to be recognised in his haggard misery: nothing soothed him, nothing distracted his mind from it. He was quite a young man when it happened, upright in figure, strong in health, but six months after his hair was gray, and he had the look of one who labours under a mortal sickness. He was not communicative on the subject, and even when Dorothea, hoping to do him good, tried to approach it, he shrank away, as if her touch were too rude for that still-bleeding wound. People who met him in the street glanced at him with compassion and foreboding. George Sancton and the rest spared him in the business as much as they could; but he, as if sensible that occupation was the best medicine for his suffering mind, kept up to his duties with mechanical precision and exactitude. He permitted no one to miss him who had need of him, but it seemed for a long time as if the strength, and spirit, and hope, were quite crushed out of his heart.

The first sign of rallying that Dorothea detected, was one stormy Sunday night, the winter

after Lilian's death. They were sitting together in the parlour, and he had just opened a book to read when the whole lane began to echo with shrill hoots, whistling and shrieks. The noise was too common on that day at that hour, to cause any surprise; for the unseemly riot was of regular recurrence on Sunday nights at eight o'clock in the winter season, when the little chapel in the lane left, and Robert had heard it as a matter of course for years. Half a dozen lads pelted past the window laughing and yelling at the top of their voices, pursued by the angry oaths of another whom they had offended, as foul as the mud in the street. Dorothea shuddered, and looked at Robert; who, as the noise ceased, shut his book and said—

“I wonder if it would be possible to do any good amongst these poor creatures, who are living and dying in such ignorance and misery within a stone's cast of us.”

“Possible for *you*, do you mean, Robert?” Dorothea asked.

“Yes; if I were to take my Bible and go amongst them, and do what I could?”

"But they have their own minister at the chapel now, have they not?"

"No; the place is to let. Poor old Tommy Baily was to be there to-night; not quite himself, I'm afraid, for I met him as I came from the Minster reeling across to the lane."

"Tommy is worse than nobody; but still, Robert, I do not see what you could do?"

"I could pay the rent of the chapel, and collect a few of the worst and poorest about me, perhaps; at least, I could try. Such an uproar as we have every Sunday night is a disgrace in a Christian city."

"Not very *Christian*, Robert; but you would not like to turn Dissenter, would you? for the example's sake, if for nothing else."

"There is no question of turning. I should take away no man's work, and interfere with no man's office. These people are simply unclaimed waifs and strays, for whom no man appears to consider account will have to be given. I do not profess myself as belonging to any sect, and *you* will not suspect me of the ambition of founding one."

"But you would certainly be *called* a Methodist, and it would be thought very strange, would it not?"

"It would be more strange, Dorothea, if, seeing a certain work that I could do, I were to leave it undone. I am not daunted by any fear of ridicule, if that is what you mean."

"We have always been such steady church-goers—twice every Sunday, Robert."

"And so we can be still. The chapel is only open at night when there is no service at the Minster."

"Well, Robert, I am sure you know what is right; and if you think you could do good, it is not for me to speak a word against it, only I fear you will find the people ungrateful—they are such a wild, neglected set."

"If I undertook the task in expectation of reward I should deserve and earn disappointment—but I should not. The effort will do me good in myself first, for trouble is making me selfish. And if it is hard to bear for me, how much worse must it be for these poor souls, who seem to have no hope or expectation beyond

this weariful world!" He covered his eyes, and there was no sound in the room for a long while. Dorothea was silent; she knew the master was thinking of his little wife.

IV.

The chapel was in a close alley about fifty yards lower down Maiden Lane than Robert Hawthorne's house, in an alley so narrow that a person could touch the walls on either hand in walking down it. The poorest of the poor families in Walton huddled themselves together there as a last resort before being turned into the streets. The property belonged to a tradesman in the town who would neither improve it, sell it, nor pull it down, and half the low fevers and infectious complaints that periodically ravaged the low population of Walton were bred in that one Grace Lane—Ill-Grace would have been a more apt title. There is an old saw which avers, "the nearer the church the farther from God;" and substitute *chapel* for church, and here

was a full exemplification of it. The chapel, which was an ugly brick building at the top of the alley, had been until now let to Dissenters of different denominations for various short periods since the proprietor of Grace Lane, in a speculative rather than pious mood, caused it to be erected. But the monotonous discourses of the ministers failed to attract sufficient pew-rents to pay the humblest salary, and the frequent change of sect had brought the cause of religion generally into great contempt amongst the loose characters who thronged that neighbourhood. The common Sunday-evening end to the service was, therefore, a scrimmage of taunts and mockery between the few curious or peaceably disposed chapel-goers and the general populace. The place was now standing unlet; its windows smashed by casual stones, and its door battered as only doors of bankrupt tabernacles ever seem to be. Topsy Tommy Baily, the proprietor's ranter nephew, had recently been preaching in it to keep it aired until some accredited minister could be induced to take it, and during this interregnum the habitual riot had redoubled its vivacity.

Robert Hawthorne, therefore, when he entered into treaty for the building, found the owner willing to let it on easy terms, and the next Sunday evening he presented himself, Bible in hand, amongst the noisy groups, who clustered at the mouth of the alley and at the house doors, waiting for Tommy and his flock, and to their profound astonishment asked them to come into the chapel. A great many, moved by a spirit of curiosity, went, and it was remarked that they afterwards dispersed as quietly as the most methodical congregation in the town.

Robert repaired the chapel, and, as all the seats were free, he soon had it filled with the class of people whose interests he sought. He had been teaching there nearly three months before the fact became generally known or believed in the town, and then, as Dorothea had foreseen, he had to suffer not a few sarcastic innuendoes from his acquaintance. Saint, methodist, puritan, were epithets frequently dropped in his hearing, though never had any one the courage so to call him to his face; but he bore the imputation with grave indifference, and though he was considered righ-

teous overmuch, radical and crotchety, he gained in respect amongst his townsfolks rather than lost; even Dorothea, who was at first very anxious on the matter, soon gave up asking what people said or thought of the master's doings, and bravely declared that whatever he set his hand to must be right and worthy. Some individuals gave him their most reverent admiration, and the Methodists, who chose to regard him as one of themselves, wanted him on one or two great occasions to preach in their regular chapel; but Robert Hawthorne's mission was to Grace Lane and such as Grace Lane, and he firmly declined all their invitations.

I wish I could give you any adequate picture of the interior of that ugly old chapel on the Sunday nights when Robert Hawthorne had been teaching there about a year. It was filled to overflowing—out on the steps of the door, below the open windows—wherever they could catch a word; not a select congregation by any means; the gatherings of lanes and courts, of highways and hedges, for there was a tramps' lodging-house in the alley, and he had his auditors even amongst

them. They were good listeners, these very disreputable people, and what Robert had to tell them must have worn to some the novelty of a story they had never heard before, while to others it would come as a revival of memories long since obscure,—to all as a humanizing influence, and a sound of a better hope than anything their sordid lives could give.

There is nothing easier than to laugh at the oratorical efforts of unlettered men, but there is nothing harder to laugh away than the affection and enthusiasm of the unlettered hearers of many of them. Robert soon won himself a place in the hearts of his people. He saw them in their own homes, in the midst of their toils, their privations, and their losses, which they had scarce time to weep, and there was scarcely one amongst them who had not a secret gratitude to him for acts of kindness done to them in their need. They could believe what he preached because they saw its effect in his daily practice. When he spoke to them of suffering, they saw that he had suffered; when he spoke to them of love, they saw that he loved; when he spoke to them of

faith and patience, they saw that he had that faith which is salvation, and that patience which the Christian wins when he has learnt to say from the depths of a wounded heart, "God's will be done!"

It shall go hard with a man, speaking of what he feels, preaching what he believes, but he shall make some converts to his mission whatever it be; sincerity and earnestness combined make up a power which never fails of its harvest, and this power Robert Hawthorne possessed. He could not have read you a sentence from the New Testament in the original Greek, but he could draw such lessons from its pages as went home to the hearts of his hearers much more readily than any eloquent doctrinal discourse could have done. His illustrations were homely, his language simple, his arguments clear and forcible, his countenance grave, but his name was a household word to hundreds, and his charity was a proverb amongst the poor and destitute.

After an interval he established a school for the children, and amongst them Dorothea found a duty to do, and did it with all her natural energy and kindness. Of course, Robert had his disappoint-

ments, his crosses, his difficulties—what human labour is without? but he never wearied in what he had undertaken, and Sunday after Sunday, year after year, he was to be found in the old white-washed chapel with his intent throng of forlorn listeners around him, doing to his utmost his Master's service. He did it for more than thirty years, and I have been told that when one night a new minister rose in his place and said to the people that they would see Robert Hawthorne there no more, a sob burst from the hushed crowd as from one heart, and there was not a dry eye in the chapel.

And knowing what he had been to them, I know that it was true.

CHAPTER THE FIFTH.

RETRIBUTION.

"THOUGH the mills of God grind slowly, yet they grind
exceeding small ;
Though with patience stands He waiting, with exactness
grinds He all."

I.

Few men could, I imagine, pass two years of the most thoughtful period of their lives in the enforced solitude of a prison without finding themselves and their views of the world very considerably changed, either for the better or the worse ; its action on some characters would be like the influence of darkness upon plants—dwarfing and enfeebling them, and making their hues pallid and sickly ; and on others like the cutting down to the root of watery overgrowth, so that new shoots may spring up, straight, strong, and fair, from the

pruned wood. The discipline upon Cyrus Hawthorne's temperament was analogous to the latter process. He had lived before too much in the whirl of his own sensations, and had let himself go too easily with the impulse of circumstances ever to have truly felt the solemnity and duty of existence. With a natural instinct of nobleness, an admiration of virtue, a preference for goodness, he had a thousand times erred contemptibly; and in the whole course of his practice there was at best but a very blurred attempt at unity or design.

During the first few months of his imprisonment he chafed miserably; but at length he accepted the inevitable, and set himself to make the best of it. Books were freely allowed him, therefore he studied severely, and, perhaps, accomplished more than he would have done in ten years outside those dismal walls. He had the occasional society of a worthy chaplain, who possessed a natural talent for disputation and high mental cultivation; who was ready in argument, charitable in temper, and a good Christian in his own daily practice. Cyrus was no match at all for him. His stupid

sophistries and half-considered objections fell effaced before Mr. Vernon's home-thrusts; and often his subject slipped from him entirely because his knowledge was too weak to take a good grip of it. Mr. Vernon never allowed any triumph to appear over poor Cyrus's defeats; his victories were too easy for that. He merely regarded him as a young misguided man, whose blunders rather than whose convictions had lodged him in the slough of infidelity, and whom it was a part of his duty to endeavour to rescue. It may, perhaps, be anticipated that, in conclusion, I shall state how Cyrus was thoroughly converted from his speculative ways of thinking by the chaplain's orthodox and well-based arguments; but as religion is not a matter of reason solely, I am bound to admit that, in this respect, he was not materially changed, though in others he was. For instance, he declined reaping the fruits of his cheap martyrdom, which those in whose cause he had suffered were waiting to offer; and declared, instead, that mature reason had convinced him of the radical errors and impracticability of the principles he had for a brief while espoused. This confession of faith

drew down upon him, in lieu of glorification, the abuse and scorn which men should always lay their account for, when, in a fit of petulance or hardship, they act falsely to their better knowledge, and elect themselves to preach doctrines they do not believe. Cyrus got no more than his deserts. Shortsighted, unreasoning, prejudiced as his contemporaries might be, they were not in his instance unjust. If he chose to masquerade before the multitude in a borrowed garment, he had no right to complain if they applied to him the epithet of turncoat when he appeared in his natural clothing; nor yet, having lent his pen and his smooth tongue to the advocacy of what was to them a great and holy faith, had he cause for indignation if he found himself designated renegade and apostate when he seceded from it.

As the term of his imprisonment drew towards a close, his brother Robert and Sir Philip Nugent both wrote to ask him to point out in what way he would be best satisfied to begin the world anew; but Cyrus, deeply humiliated at heart by what he had undergone, and confident that he was now capable of enduring sacrifices, and fighting

his battle of life unaided, made answer that it was his wish henceforward to depend upon himself. He had a brain not meanly furnished, and he had a pair of helpful hands which would make his way for him he did not doubt. He declined his father's proffered allowance on the plea that he would not be fettered from uttering his own independent views in his own way, and at his own time, by the fear of having it again withdrawn, in case he should offend against Sir Philip's principles. One such injustice, he observed, was sufficient for a lifetime. The young man claimed his freedom of thought in a high, even arrogant tone, and Sir Philip took umbrage at it;—he had meant to be kind, liberal, and unexacting now, and was vexed at being so misunderstood; he could see and amend a mistake as well as his son.

“It is like his pride to believe that he has only to try and win!” remarked he, angrily; “it will do him no harm to let him prove his feebleness again, though the last lesson might have been enough. But even experience finds some fools very inapt to learn when they wear the spectacles of self-conceit, like poor Cyrus; he has some

talent, but far from talent of the first order, though he is as vain as a peacock."

Robert was in no wise offended; he thought that a struggle for independence would be a wholesome and natural discipline to his brother's character, and in the kindly intention of encouraging his resolve he went to Lancaster to receive him when he came out of the castle. Cyrus was touched, and he was glad; he had written a curt letter begging Robert to take no trouble about him, but the unexpected welcome was very acceptable. He did not know how pleasant it is to see a brotherly face in adversity until Robert met him and took him to his inn, rejoicing much as the father in the parable rejoiced over the return of his prodigal son. It is not many friends whom we should be wise to put to such a proof as the oblivion and shame of a long imprisonment might inflict upon us; but Robert only remembered that his brother had suffered the expiation of his reckless folly, and should now be comforted.

Cyrus was looking thin, and ill, and dispirited, and Robert would fain have taken him home to the quiet nursing of Dorothea Sancton; but Cyrus

said that what he wanted now was not longer stagnation, but work and effort; besides, it would not have suited him to meet his father or his father's wife at present, or any one who had known him in his prosperous days; therefore, the sooner he hid himself in the crowds of London, the happier and freer should he feel. Robert, perceiving that his mind was set, did not gainsay him; he understood his brother's proud, uneasy feelings, and compelling him to accept fifty pounds to start with, he let him go; reminding him that he must not be withheld by any consideration from asking further help if he did not soon find his anticipations answered in other ways. Cyrus acceded for the sake of setting his brother's mind at rest, but he internally resolved that neither Robert nor any one else should henceforward be his almoner.

It was in this confident frame of mind he went up to London, fixed himself in respectable lodgings in one of the quiet streets about Bedford Square, and then presented himself to a few of the most intimate of his former acquaintance—of friends, properly so called, he had none; but so

little enthusiastic was their reception that, in a savage moment of disappointment, he renounced them all as hollow worldlings, and sought out poor old Master Scrope, who almost wept for joy at the sight of him. Once or twice in his bitter temper he remembered Lola, but Chelsea was a long way off. "When I have *done* something," said he to himself, "then I will go and see her. She must be a woman now, and will have lost the primitive innocence that made her prefer me poor, and in an old coat. I should not like her to give me a rebuff like the rest, so I had better spare myself the risk of it."

II.

He was, however, destined to see her, though himself unseen, within a fortnight of his arrival in London. Passing one morning by the doors of a fashionable concert-room, he saw her name standing in large capitals upon the bills hanging against the walls. It was her first appearance, the placard stated, and Cyrus instantly went to

secure a good seat, and a ticket; he began to feel quite pleased and eager at the idea of seeing her so soon—dear, little, affectionate Lola! By this time it is possible that he found his own society, and that of Master Scrope, sometimes hanging rather heavily on hand. London is a dreary place for a young man without friends.

He reached the concert-room betimes, but found it already overflowing. Lola's fame had gone before her from many a private musical meeting, and Señor Manuel's friends and patrons had gathered in full force to give *éclat* to her *début*. Combined with her were several minor constellations, sure to please, but not sure to outshine; prudence had suggested to the Señor not to bring any stars of the first magnitude into contact with his niece on that critical night, lest they should win away from her the warmest suffrages. But, apart from this judicious arrangement, he was tolerably certain of her success.

Cyrus grew very impatient of the overture, and the two or three other pieces, which preceded the appearance of Lola; but, at last, led by her uncle, she advanced to the front of the orchestra,

and was greeted by the audience with a generous applause extorted by her grace and beauty. It encouraged her Cyrus saw, and he smiled in silent pleasure, as if in some way or other her success would be a tribute to himself.

The little brown girl was become beautiful—rarely, ripely, luxuriantly beautiful. Her face, neck, and arms were, at first, one pale clear hue of sunned marble, exquisitely turned and moulded; but when she began to sing, a rich soft flush warmed her cheeks, like the vermeil tint in the inner curves of a shell. The thick folds of her naturally waved hair, the straight lines of her brows, the melting lustre of her large eyes, the delicate outline of lips and chin and throat, would have satisfied the most fastidious connoisseur of female loveliness, and the visible tremor and modesty of a young girl in her *début*, before a notoriously critical audience, in most eyes enhanced her charm. When her song ended, there was a moment's pause, and then a great outburst of applause. The audience was satisfied,—more than satisfied, it was delighted. Cyrus applauded with all his might, hoping she would perceive and

recognise him, for he was near the orchestra; but he very ill appreciated her state of mind, in thinking that possible; for to Lola there was nothing visible but a sea of faces, of which her eyes refused to distinguish any. She sang twice again with even more signal success than at first; the pure quality of her voice, its sweetness, its flexibility, and its strength without effort, were remarkable in a performer so young. From the first night of her appearance she was a favourite.

When Cyrus found from the programme that she would not sing again, he hastened from the room, and would have spoken to her, and claimed the renewal of their friendship that night; but the ticket-taker told him that she had left with Señor Manuel and her aunt the moment her part was finished. He was disappointed for the moment, but he walked home fluttered and gratified, perhaps as much as Lola herself—in his mind he was patronizing her, extolling her, and making her little heart glad with his praises. When he reached his lodgings, the whole of a charming sonnet was singing in his brain, so he wrote it down at once, and the next morning she

had it—for he carried it to the post at once, that it might go by the first delivery, and greet her at her breakfast with its pretty spontaneous compliments. He was sure she would recognise the writing, and in the afternoon he followed up the appearance of his herald by a personal visit.

III.

Lola had shed a shower of sunshiny tears over Cyrus Hawthorne's poetical tribute, and at about the same hour as he was leaving his lodgings in town, she began to expect him, wish for him, dream about him. She had pleaded excuses for his long forgetfulness, and had forgiven him, but she could not help wondering how they should meet. She was too old now for the childish familiarities that he used to court, and, besides, she had learnt some of those lessons which beautiful women are never slow in taking home to their soft innocent bosoms. But would he be much changed? Would those two wretched years of prison-life have deteriorated him, or would he

be still handsome, gay, spirited, delightful? She knew prisoners were sometimes allowed to write letters—why had he never written to her? How was it that he had not sought the cottage at Chelsea as soon as he was free, instead of sending her a set of complimentary verses, after seeing her at a distance in a place of public entertainment?

Then she fancied that perhaps even now he would not come. He might be too much occupied, too much beset with friends and admirers eager to do him honour, after his sufferings, to afford any of his time to her, but she watched and waited for him nevertheless, and prevised what he would say and how he would look twenty times over.

She had dressed herself charmingly, and had decked the little drawing-room with a few October flowers, to fête him should he come; she wanted him to feel his welcome at the first sight of her, for she had a lurking fear that he *might* be broken and discouraged, embittered and distrustful, but he must not distrust her. She had seen Uncle Manuel depart to his aristocratic pupils, and had set her aunt off on a round of visits to her friends

and acquaintance, that if they were to meet it might be alone; and then she sat, almost counting the minutes, until the wicket gate swung open, and a quick, well-remembered step rang on the gravelled garden walk. Her heart began to palpitate foolishly fast, and Cyrus, who had had some natural doubts of his welcome, entered the room looking gray and grave, and somewhat different from what he used to do; but a vivid blush and brightening of the eyes, a few breathless words, and then a long-quivering sigh drawn up out of the depths of her heart, told him how glad, how unfeignedly glad and happy, she was to see him. He was glad too,—he was immediately *sure* of her; there was no afterthought of contempt or defiance in her mind; she was the same single-hearted, sincere, faithful little soul whom he used to tease so mercilessly, and trust so entirely, long ago. In an instant he remembered all her childish humilities and worship of himself, but whatever he remembered he only liked her the better for.

“You will restore my faith in human nature, Lola,” said he, cheerfully, sitting down beside

her ; " you are the only one of my friends whom I find unaltered. Except that you are taller and lovelier, I see no difference at all."

" I hope you do not, but never mind me, Cyrus, talk to me about yourself;" and Lola beamed upon him joyously.

" That is like old times, but I am afraid now of wearying you with the sameness of the story."

" Why afraid? you could not weary me. Oh! Cyrus, why did you not send me a letter when you were in that dreadful prison? You do not know how we honoured you in your misfortunes."

" Honoured me, Lola!" said Cyrus, changing countenance.

" Yes, were you not suffering in the cause of the desolate and oppressed? All good men must respect and honour you. Oh! Cyrus, don't count me amongst those who can see no glory save in success!"

Lola spoke and looked in her enthusiasm very like the little brown girl who used to regard him from the heroic side so determinedly in past years, and that she had not yet deposed him from his pedestal was obvious.

But Cyrus was learning to be sincere, and at all risks he would try to undeceive her.

"Listen, Lola," said he, quietly. "I have a confession to make, and when it is done perhaps you will despise me." He paused for encouragement, and she gave it.

"We all go wrong now and then and repent, but I am sure you could do nothing mean, cowardly, cruel, or false," said she.

Cyrus began to doubt whether it was worth while enlightening her; her good opinion was sufficiently precious to him, but he did say:

"Don't speak of honouring me, Lola, in circumstances where I was despicable; I would willingly forget, if I could, that I ever acted such a part; by nature, education, and prejudice I was unfit for it.

Lola paused thoughtfully for a few moments and then said:

"But it was a great cause, Cyrus; it is a noble endeavour, even though it fail, to try to make the condition of the working poor permanently better."

"What do you know about it, little Lola?"

asked Cyrus, with an air of gentle rail-lery.

“ Not much, but I imagined you had it at heart, and I read books and papers to understand it for your sake.”

Cyrus discreetly let that theme drop, and as Lola questioned him of his present occupations and plans, he permitted himself to expatiate upon them and to claim her sympathy exactly in the old way. Lola was ready to grant it. Their relation to each other was peculiar, but it fitted both with the case of habit: if Lola loved the more it was but according to the ancient rule of inequality in friendship as in a warmer affection. One gives and the other takes with a return less fervent and less exacting; but Lola felt her maidenly dignity now, and in her softest sympathy there was a measure of reserve.

“ Take me round the garden, before I say good-bye; that garden used to be a pleasant place once upon a time, did not you think so, Lola?” asked Cyrus, with a half-laughing, sentimental retrospection when they had been together a long hour.

Lola coloured, and for an instant a faint spark

of temper flashed into her eyes, but swift some gust of memory blew it out, and looking down, half ashamed, she yet acknowledged that it had been a pleasant place. Cyrus perceived that she would rather he had forgotten her childish attachment to himself in some respects, and that its privileges would be his henceforward in only a modified degree; he would not be suffered to trifle with her feelings now as he did then; it was neither possible nor justifiable that he should do so.

But forth into the garden they went, rustling amongst the early fallen leaves with their feet, and pausing every now and then by the autumnal borders for some allusion to the past or some suggestion about the future. These were nearly all concerning Cyrus's affairs; of her own, Lola told little more than that she had abandoned her old ambition of being an actress, much to her aunt's satisfaction, and that but for Uncle Manuel she would never have sung in public at all. Cyrus commended her. He said that for a woman whom he loved he should detest any kind of personal display.

He would not stay to see her aunt then, but promised a speedy renewal of his visit, and so took leave and went back to his dreary lodgings infinitely cheered.

IV.

That was a hard winter ; a very hard winter, with long frosts and east winds parching up the springs of life in the frail bodies of thousands who were out of work. But thus far Cyrus Hawthorne was safe and comfortable in his bedroom on the third floor, where the fire blazed every day and he had enough to eat.

That lasted how long ? He was not learned in the science of economy, or Robert's fifty pounds *might* have been eked out to carry him through the winter ; but he was confident of earning supplies, and never quite realized a possibly moneyless condition until, just before Christmas day, he was obliged to change his last five-pound note to pay his landlady. He counted his shillings after that, and retrenched a meal a day : he was

in earnest that he would maintain himself, it began to appear. Fate had decreed that he should learn, by a dismal experience, pity for the poor, whose daily labour will not always win them daily bread. He had theorized on the subject cleverly enough, but what is cleverness and what is theory in comparison with feeling and hard practice? In a very little while from this he could have drawn a picture of the sufferings of the unfortunate destitute, vivid enough to move the indurated feelings even of a Millburn audience.

Under the spur of necessity Cyrus worked with diligence; he had before him the humiliation of possible defeat in this renewed campaign of life which he had chosen to encounter without allies, and he strained every nerve to avert it. He had in hand a dramatic poem the plot of which had been conceived at Lancaster; he now made haste to finish it, with a view of converting it into bread; but, alas! when finished, it was rejected. Dramatic poems would not sell. He hawked it from bookseller's shop to bookseller's shop during three entire days, and never induced one person so much as to look at it. He would not avail him-

self of the credit or discredit of any former productions to advance the present one; he wished to cut himself entirely adrift from that reputation which was not wholesome in all nostrils. He therefore proffered his manuscript under a feigned name, and only encountered the curtest of rejections.

He had a tragedy on the subject of Essex and Queen Elizabeth, in which there was a great amount of fine sentiment and sonorous writing; but the managers told him the legitimate drama was gone out of fashion and they could do nothing with his play, which was, besides, better adapted for the closet than the stage.

He had certain essays, moral and didactic, which he had written in his cynical moods when he fancied himself philosophical; but apparently moral essays were gone out of fashion too, or the public had given a diploma to certain persons to supply that article, and refused to accept anything from other sources, as an infringement of the lucrative monopoly.

By the time he had experienced these failures, Cyrus had increased his knowledge of the world

on many points where people in general prefer total ignorance; but his courage, roused by the occasion, kept him up. He used to carry his disappointments and his complaints to Lola, who did her best to cheer him, though I am afraid he grumbled sometimes rather wearifully. She tried to advise him, and many a long, long hour did she listen to his manuscripts read aloud by himself, to prove their weak or strong points on her judgment. Her approval was much more frequent than her disapprobation. At a suggestion from her he rapidly wrote a tale, which, though it did not find acceptance amongst the magazines, was welcomed by a publisher who promised him five-and-twenty pounds for it, if a certain number of copies were sold within a certain date. Cyrus was a little cheered, and Lola rejoiced at this first faint glimmer of success. The young man had been very scrupulous in the midst of all his confidences, not to say a word by which she could divine the extent of his necessities; and when she saw his bulk decreasing and his visage looking wan and disconsolate, she never surmised that he was suffer-

ing the most painful yet prosaic of needs, but laid it all to the account of mental anxiety and hard work.

On the strength of his expectations from the publisher, his landlady allowed him credit for his rent and his breakfasts, and his laundress let her bill run. For the rest, he used to go out in the middle of the day and make belief to dine. The young fellow was bitterly ashamed of his poverty, but while he was starved within he contrived to keep an appearance of perfect respectability in his dress; and though his clothes hung upon him loosely, and his features were overspread with an unhealthy pallor, he still had all the air and bearing of a gentleman. Out of the experience of his enforced privations, he indited an article against the wanton waste of those persons who support nature on four meals a day; two, he said, were sufficient; but if he had had the courage to confess all, he would have had to reduce that to *one*; to one, consisting of a penny roll of bread and a cup of coffee, for this was exactly what he discovered it to be possible to subsist upon for a considerable in-

terval,—always in anticipation of the five-and-twenty pounds that were coming due.

On the day when he expected to receive it, he went abroad earlier than usual; revived and in better spirits than he had been able to feel for some weeks back. The publisher knew, of course, what he was come for, but he entered into conversation with him on indifferent matters, and when the subject was broached as a “by the bye,” he replied how sorry he was that the little tale had not had a success commensurate with his expectations, and that the stipulated number of copies had *not* been sold.

Cyrus was too much *cut* to ask any questions; he had a vague recollection afterwards of having laughed as he heard the announcement, and of saying something about “better luck next time;” but when he came to a clear sense of the weight of the disappointment, he was walking stupidly home again, with a dismal feeling of hopelessness and despair nipping his heart as the horrible dry March wind nipped his body.

A single line to his brother would have been effectual in changing all this; Robert would

gladly have supported him until he could have supported himself, but Cyrus had made a vow to keep his own counsel on his difficulties, and he did it. Had Robert been within reach of a personal application perhaps his high resolve might have given way, but after all his protestations and repulses of kindness, he could not humiliate himself to write a begging letter. He was become chary now of even seeing Master Scrope, lest he should urge him to take a step against which his pride revolted, and his actual necessities remained a secret between himself and his landlady. She knew all his privations and saw through all his pretences, but she never failed in her respect towards him. When she admitted him on his return from the publisher's, she guessed correctly what had happened, though he tried to say, in his natural voice, "A fine dry morning, Mrs. Mawson; it does one good to take a walk in the frost," and thought that, as likely as not, when he got shut up in his room he would cry.

She was a pretty-faced young woman with a heart rich in human kindness, but she had a

husband of the ordinary sort and two little children, so that she could not help saying to herself, as her unfortunate lodger went upstairs—“ If poor Mr. Hawthorne can't make up his rent now, I'm afraid he'll have to go.”

The fire had gone out in Cyrus's room during his absence, and mechanically his hand moved to the bell to order it to be relighted, but he drew back without ringing; and on the morrow, when the sluttish servant came, as usual, to kindle it, he told her to let it be; for the sun shone in at the window of a morning so strongly that he would rather be without. Mrs. Mawson shook her head over this fresh economy, and refrained from making any immediate allusion to the owing rent, but late that evening he gave her something on account, and received permission to stay in his room. He shrank from the necessity of having to change his abode in his present circumstances, for that would have seemed to him a great step downwards, and one, perhaps, never to be retraced. He knew how fast men sink lower and lower when they have once been forced to abandon the externals of respectability, and he clung

to them as to a forlorn hope. He therefore went on living outwardly much as before, only every now and then stealing out at nightfall with books or a bundle of clothes under his arm to a pawnbroker's shop in the Tottenham Court Road. Poor gentlemen like him can get no credit, and whether it was a hole in his boots that wanted repairing, or a rent in his coat that wanted darning, he must pay ready money.

In his exaggerated pride he would always leave a morsel of his penny roll of a morning to show that he had had enough and to spare; but Mrs. Mawson had seen him turn sick at the appetizing smell of her husband's dinner, cooking in the kitchen, and understood sorrowfully his miserable pangs, which it was a sort of consolation to him to believe were invisible to all the world. She knew that he lay late abed of a morning because of the cold, and that he fretted in secret not a little; but grieved as she might be for him she could not help him, beyond insisting when he proposed to breakfast out that he should still continue to have that meal in the house.

"Your breakfasts are not much, sir, and I know you'll pay me when you can," said she, kindly. Perhaps she suspected that if she did not see him get that little of food, he would go without it as long as nature could be still under the privation.

Are these details petty and wearisome? Nevertheless, such details are true.

V.

Cyrus could not successfully dissimulate this great disappointment with Lola, but he still contrived to keep her ignorant of his actual condition; and he did this the more readily because the facts were such as nothing within her own knowledge was likely to lead her to suspect. We often know that our friends are poor, sometimes we admit that they are obliged to pinch themselves of this and of that, but we do not realize them as existing from day to day on diet considerably lower than prison fare. Yet Cyrus was doing this; but while he kept his highly respect-

able lodgings and appeared in the garb of a gentleman, such a possibility was not likely to present itself to the minds of his friends at Chelsea. Lola's heart used to ache for him, and a little also for herself too, by and by; even now and then she could have wished she had never known him, that he had loved her not at all, or that he had loved her better. He thought much more of himself than of her at all times, and though there was, perhaps, no one living whom he would have missed so much had he lost her, he was not her lover. Lola's aunt, who was a woman of plain and practical mind, did not half approve the frequency and length of his visits, though she held her peace; she was not a believer in the possibility of simple friendship between two young people of different sexes, and more than suspected that Lola was proving the truth of her opinion in many an hour of tears. Cyrus liked Lola for a hundred reasons, but his heart did not beat for her as it had done for Phyllis or even for Félicie. Sometimes he wished she were his sister, or he would have rejoiced to convert her into a male friend; he had never

possessed one who could half so readily sympathize with the higher part of his character ; but he did not feel in her that inexplicable charm which leads men into pleasant captivity, and causes them to imagine that heaven lurks in the sunshine of one particular pair of bright eyes.

But it must be acknowledged, at the same time, that his circumstances were unfavourable to the growth of any tender passion. When necessity is our daily companion, the heart loses its expanding powers and dwines into selfishness. Poor Cyrus had been very far from anticipating this long drain upon his passive courage, and it was singular, considering some traits of his disposition, that he had not ere now relieved himself from it ; but his pride, a false shame, and a sense of cruel mortification, were at work within him, and, having drifted gradually into this dreadful sort of half living, half dying, he went on with it, vaguely wondering where it would end. Sometimes he got a few pounds or a few shillings for a story or a song, but he could not help thinking that, from some cause or other, he did not write so well as formerly ; or, perhaps, it was that he had

not the same means of attracting the attention of publishers, for he obtained but very scant courtesy from them, and if they undertook to print a volume of his, the terms they made with him were very close and hard. He thought sometimes—unjustly of course—that his necessities were the handle by which they screwed him down to the lowest farthing; but misfortunes had jaundiced his mind, and made him suspect all with whom he had to do. But it was a fact nevertheless, that for half-a-dozen tales he wrote which were widely circulated and read, he received a smaller sum than Hester Taffetas got for one of her little mezzotinto stories.

Once while in real distress he encountered the eldest of the three young Nugents of the Leasowes—that one who had contemptuously designated him “a sort of cousin,”—now a gay young man about town. They met in the Park, and though Cyrus would have passed his ancient antagonist without recognition, the other would not permit it.

“Is that you, Cyrus? My father’s in town; you must come and see him—the old place,

Eaton Square," said he, shaking Cyrus's reluctant hand.

Cyrus put on his grand manner, and muttered something about his numerous occupations. Young Nugent glanced acutely at his lean sallow face and haggard eyes, and replied, "Yes," he saw he was working himself to death.

They parted with but very few more words, but Cyrus had scarcely taken twenty steps when his cousin pursued him, and, laying a hasty hand upon his arm, said, while a fine ingenuous blush dyed his round honest face :

"Cyrus, there's no bad blood between you and me, I hope ; and I say, old fellow, if I can do *anything* for you I will ;—my father's in Parliament, and perhaps he could get you some little post that would spare your brains. Don't be proud—I know all is not quite square between you and Sir Philip, but it *might* be if you would."

Cyrus looked more annoyed than gratified by these well-meant suggestions, and, saying curtly that he was provided for, and needed no help, he marched sullenly away. But he did admit

to himself that the stupid young Nugent had a good heart.

A few days after this encounter he had a visit from his former tutor, the Rev. Samuel Miles, now a large, florid, substantial, married rector and rural dean; and it must be admitted that his stout dignity was betrayed into a gust of pettish astonishment when Mrs. Mawson, after leading him up three flights of steep stairs, ushered him into a bedroom, where Cyrus, without his coat, was scribbling by the open window—scribbling a tale which would very likely be “declined with thanks” by half a dozen booksellers, and finally consigned with a score of others to an old desk under his bed. The Rev. Samuel seated himself with ponderous gravity, and, staring at his former pupil with round, wonder-struck eyes, demanded, “What, in the name of all that’s respectable, do you mean by living in a garret?”

Cyrus coloured and laughed as he turned his chair round to face his visitor, and said, with an air of satisfaction, “I mean that I am poor, and choose to be independent.”

“Ay, ay, that is all very well, but there

is a medium, there is a medium—is that woman downstairs kind to you?” asked the Rev. Samuel, glancing round the dingy walls and furniture.

“Yes, sir, she uses me like a mother; she is a capital little soul.”

“Have you been ill? I declare you have got the look I had for a month or two when I gave up my first country curacy and came to town proposing to be a popular preacher! I found nothing to do, and gave writing lessons at sixpence an hour. You would never have believed now, would you, that I had worn threadbare coats and been on short commons?”

Cyrus did not quite like the turn the conversation had taken, but he said that since he had been in London he had seen and known of things that had led him to believe any degree of misery possible.

“Yes, there are painful scenes going on close beside us that we never suspect often; but I’ll tell you what, sir, I performed a feat in those days that I’d defy you to do—I turned a pair of trousers!”

"Necessity is the mother of invention," replied Cyrus, stooping to pick up a pen from the floor and rising with a crimson face. Had he performed any such feat of tailoring, I wonder.

"There is nothing in honest poverty to be ashamed of—nothing; but, sir, I don't like the shifts it condemns a gentleman to. Poverty is a heavy trial to human nature, and no one should voluntarily embrace its temptations who has a righteous claim on a sufficient maintenance." The Rev. Samuel had ulterior views in making these moral remarks, but Cyrus chose to acquiesce in them as mere general propositions that had not been brought home to him by personal experience."

"I'm sorry to find you are not on good terms with your father, and he is sorry also. Young Lady Nugent and the dowager stand your friends always—there is nothing to prevent a perfect reconciliation if you desire it," said the rector, by and bye.

"Sir, I do not desire it," replied Cyrus, angrily; "I desire nothing but to be left in my

independence; I have made that sufficiently understood before on two occasions, and I do not intend to depart from it now."

"Well, well, my boy, there is no need to fly at *me*—I don't want to maintain you in ease and idleness."

Cyrus modified his tone, and thanked his old tutor for any kind mission he had undertaken, but said firmly that he would not again put it into his father's power either to menace or to punish him.

"If you were doing successfully, I would not urge it upon you," replied the rector, "but, my dear fellow, I see that you are not." At this Cyrus grew wroth again, and exclaimed against his poverty and his struggles being made the ground of insult and intrusion, upon which the Rev. Samuel rose up, crying out:

"I'll intrude no longer,—show me downstairs, sir."

Cyrus felt rather ashamed of himself, and asked more humbly where his visitor was staying, that he might call.

"I am staying nowhere, sir—open the door;

I'll follow you," was the answer, and there was nothing for Cyrus to do but obey.

When he came back to his room, the first thing he saw was a sealed envelope which the Rev. Samuel had cast down upon the table as he quitted the apartment, and, taking it up, he saw that it was directed to himself in the fine tremulous handwriting of old Lady Nugent. He broke the seal and found within a bank-note for fifty pounds, and a letter in which he was addressed as her "dear grandson:" it was so kindly and sorrowfully expressed that he was touched by it miserably, but he put the money from him vowing that he would not live upon alms: she called it a "little present," and he knew that both from her and Lady Leigh he had many a time before accepted a similar one without feeling himself at all ill-used. But now, because he needed it he would not have it, and he enclosed it back to her with a brief selection of fine sentiments, touching the duty he owed to himself in maintaining his personal independence intact; which I have no doubt hurt the tender-hearted lady exceedingly. And that attempt to relieve him

was final; Lady Nugent died early that year, and in her he lost a true friend.

VI.

He now wrote to Robert but seldom, professing himself much occupied, and giving a cheerful account of his doings always. He steadily declined going down to Walton Minster, and never expressed any desire to see his brother in town, so that for upwards of eighteen months he dragged on the sort of existence I have endeavoured to indicate, quite unsuspected by his brother, before it came to a crisis. He had of late months intermitted his visits to Lola; he had not seen her, indeed, since six weeks before Christmas, and it was now well on in spring; for, at length, his spirit was broken, and he was become like some poor wounded beast, which would fain trail itself out of sight and die; even her gentle way of dressing his wounds vexed and irritated them.

One lovely May afternoon when he knocked

for admittance at the door of his lodgings after his customary stroll at dinner-time, Mrs. Mawson opened it but a few inches and said, with the tears in her eyes—

“ My master has forbid me to let you in again, sir. He says there’s fourteen weeks’ rent owing, and he won’t let it go any longer unless you can pay. I’ll keep your papers and things from the wash until you send for them, sir.”

Cyrus could *not* pay, and he turned off the step without a word of remonstrance. Everything saleable he possessed had gone to the pawnshop long since, and here he was, at last, homeless in London streets, with three halfpence in his pocket and the worn clothes he stood in:— nothing else in the whole wide world between him and starvation, or the cruel humiliation of exposing his extremity to those whose kindness he had flung away so often, and entreating their assistance. But that he said he would never do— *never*, though he died like a dog upon the stones !

He passed the rest of that day in one of the parks, and the night in walking about the streets ; in the morning he spent his three halfpence

on a cup of coffee and a bit of bread at a stall, which was all he ate that day; another night of the streets followed by a day of craving emptiness, a third night under the sky and a third day of bitter hunger. The morning after that, when the sun rose, he was wandering about the fields near Chelsea, and he thought that in the course of the day he would go and look at Lola's home—perhaps, at her faithful little self, and then—and then—Ah! who shall blame the wild, mad designs men form when they have fought their battle with all their might and have been worsted bitterly?

“In the course of the day,” Cyrus said to himself, but before seven o'clock he was in the pretty lane, peering through the gate at the garden, all bright and flowery in its fresh spring dress. There were a thousand delicious scents from the dewy lilacs, the sweetbriar, the gilly-flowers, stocks and narcissus, with which the borders were filled. The housemaid had set the window wide in the parlour, and was singing at her work of sweeping and dusting. The place looked the perfection of home and comfort to the poor,

hungry, soiled wayfarer outside; but after he had gazed at it wistfully for two or three minutes, the servant came to the door to shake her mats, and he moved away. He was soon back again, however, and, at length, his hovering about the house attracted the woman's attention; she watched him go and return, but his air did not excite her suspicion, or she would very quickly have ordered him off, for Sarah was a very dragon in the guardianship of her mistress's property. On the contrary, she stood regarding him furtively for a few minutes, and then she stepped lightly upstairs to Lola's room, and announced, to her extreme surprise,—

“Miss Lola, there's been a young man hanging about the garden ever since I got up, and I do believe it is Mr. Hawthorne, and if it is he looks so strange and ill.”

“Oh! Sarah, I think you must be mistaken, Mr. Hawthorne never walks out of town so early!” Lola replied; but nevertheless, she got up from her table, where for the last hour she had been diligently copying some music of her uncle Manuel's, and away she went to one of the front

windows to look out. She knew Cyrus in a moment, altered and disfigured as he was, and without a word, while the blood rushed violently back upon her heart, she ran downstairs and into the garden.

He began to walk away as soon as he saw her approaching in her fresh morning beauty of face and dress, but she called after him pleadingly,

"Oh! Cyrus, Cyrus, will you not speak to me?" and he turned back. "Come in," said she, stretching out her hand; "come in, Uncle Manuel is away, and my aunt is not up; you will see only me, and we will have our breakfast together."

"I was taking an early walk, and I thought I would come this way," Cyrus answered, with an effort at his usual manner, though his lips moved with the clammy slowness of exhaustion.

"It is a long time since you have been to see us," said Lola, averting her eyes from his ghastly, unshorn face; she understood that he did not wish her to see his miseries, and she became instantly blind to them, but her heart swelled at the thought of what he must have gone through,

before his visage took that impress of wan despair.

“I had not forgotten you—indeed, there is no one I have thought of more; but, somehow, latterly I have not been much in the way of seeing my friends.”

They entered the little breakfast parlour together, and Cyrus dropped wearily into the first chair he came to, but Lola hastily pushed forward her uncle Manuel's, and begged him to take that, as so much easier, if he were tired. After he had done so, he remarked that opposite the first seat he had taken, there was a long old-fashioned mirror, and it flashed across his memory what a deplorable object he must present to her sight. A wan blush rose to his face, and he passed one of his lean, bloodless hands over it, to hide the involuntary spasm of shame, till Sarah, entering with the fragrant coffee and new rolls, diverted his mind from everything else. He could not conceal the animal voracity with which he eyed and ate the food, but Lola chatted quietly and inobservantly, and suggested to Sarah that Mr. Hawthorne's early walk must have sharpened his

appetite into a relish for some more substantial food than she had set before them. Sarah therefore brought in meat and eggs, and remarked as she set them down, that if Mr. Hawthorne were not used to breakfast so early of a morning, he could join her mistress at that meal an hour later.

Poor Cyrus said to himself that the woman must have found him out, and that she wished to warn him thus of the danger of eating much in his hungered condition. Lola kept her eyes so long turned away, and he was so silent, that she did not at first perceive the tears begin weakly to roll down his hollow cheeks, but when she did see them she sprang up impetuous, and ran to him, crying :

“ Oh ! Cyrus, don't mind me ! think that I am only little Lola, to whom you promised to tell all your troubles ; be sure that though you have no other friend, she will love you always, if you will only let her.”

He covered his face with his thin hands for ever so long, and she continued standing by him, waiting until he could speak to her, and uttering

kind encouraging words every now and then in a sweet tremulous voice.

"How can you have patience with such a maudlin fool as I am become?" said he, desperately. "Oh, Lola, I am fallen so low, I am so abject and miserable, that I wish I were dead."

"There is *one* who would grieve if you were. Dear Cyrus, take heart,—have courage; we will all help you. You are distressed now, and nervous for want of rest. Stay here, where no one will disturb you, while I seek my aunt; she will be vexed if I do not tell her you are come."

"Stop, Lola! I could not bear to see her to-day; I hardly know what mad impulse led me this way; I meant to keep my miseries to myself."

"Oh! Cyrus, be intreated. We are only women in the house, and would take care of you—you do not mind any of us."

"Yes, Lola, I do; let me try to keep some shreds of self-respect. You have seen, and will pity me; I can endure pity from you, but not from others. Let me go now, and, if you *can*, forget that ever you saw me in such wretchedness."

"If you would only stay a day or two to recover your strength."

"You mistake, I have not been ill. My work, and the life I have led lately, have told on me—that is all."

"And that is far too much. At least, tell me where you lodge, for I am going to sing at a concert next week, and I should like to send you a ticket to come and hear me."

Cyrus gave her his address as still at Mrs. Mawson's, and thanked her, and then hurried to get away, while the courage that food had put into his heart still served him.

VII.

He recalled her appearance after he was gone, and wandering through the fields again, with a curious distinctness. Her pretty, round, flexible figure in its fresh muslin dress, her unconscious grace of mien and gesture, and her good expressive face; especially he recalled the sunny womanly sweetness of her smooth low forehead, with the

large eyes lying shadowed beneath, deep and clear as waterpools, haunting him with a mute reproach, as if she would ask why he did not wholly trust his little friend: for already his pride pricked him that he had let her see his misery.

By and bye a quick spring rain began to fall, and he hastened back towards the turmoil of the town, but without any object in particular; the tormenting suggestions of ridding himself of his painful existence had vanished since he had seen Lola. Homeless, penniless, friendless, whither could he go, unless to Master Scrope? And he had begun to distrust Master Scrope, for the old man had never seen him latterly without urging upon him that he ought to communicate with his brother. He went to him that evening, however, and in the course of it some of his distresses came out—not *all*, and not the *worst*; Cyrus always had some reserves.

"There are some luckless poor fellows, who, with all their talent, seem to have been made *not* to get on in the world," the master said woefully; "*I* belong to that order, and I begin to be afraid *you* belong to it also. If Robert knew how badly

you are off, he would take it unkindly that you do not let him help you, for he is goodness itself."

But Cyrus would not write to his brother. He could not bear to acknowledge that the talents of which his kinsfolk had thought so much, would not keep him in daily bread. He had been so proud and confident of his capabilities, that it was more than he could bring himself to do in avowing the humiliating result.

Master Scrope had his say about Sir Philip Nugent also. "He brought you up to lead the life of an idle fine gentleman, and having virtually made you helpless, he had no right, under any provocation, to deprive you of the means of subsistence independently of any toil. He ought to have set you beyond the reach of differences that might occur by giving you means out of his own power to recall as soon as you were of age. Quarrels and difficulties often arise between fathers and their heirs; and between you two there was even greater than ordinary probability of them."

"It is no use talking about that now, but I never did and never could forgive my miserable

false position," said Cyrus, drearily; "every torture I ever endured, and every sin I ever committed, seem to me to have had their source in that. I could not reconcile myself to it, or acknowledge it irremediable as Robert did, and ever since, so to speak, I have been knocking my head and my heart against it, with the same results to it and them as if I had been driving myself physically against a stone wall."

"It would have been better for you if you could have taken it in the plain common-sense way, and have set yourself to do the best instead of the worst in it."

"It is easy to say that, less easy to do. I believe it has been to Robert a grievance far greater than he would ever admit; and the sting, the misery, it has been to me no one can guess! All my distrusts of my father sprang naturally from it, and all our aggravations and quarrels since. He has no ideas of abstract justice; he expected from me the implicit obedience, love, and reverence of a son, and at the same time the gratitude and submissiveness of a pensioner who had no rightful claim upon him, and the moment I

failed in these latter acquirements he practically denied that I *had* any claim upon him."

"But I think he has offered to repair that mistake since."

"It is a mistake incapable of being repaired. It showed, in fact, how he could have me at his beck and call like a slave, and determined me in breaking such a yoke without ado. I don't deny that he loved me, after his fashion, or that I loved him; he has all personal attractive qualities, and for a lawful son he would have been a father almost to adore—so indulgent, sympathetic, and affectionate; but he is not one to hold the power of doing wrong without using it. There never lived a man who was a more thoroughly successful self-deceiver; instead of ever reflecting that I might demand more consideration than an heir, being less independent of him, he seems to have thought that he might use me capriciously without my having any just cause of complaint. Instead of his irreparable wrong to me being a check on his injustice, it has been the very moving cause of it."

"Ay, ay. He was treacherous and cruel to your

poor mother, and no dependence could be placed on a man who had used her as he did ; I would have no trust in a man who lets honour go when some strong passion is against it. If the facts of that episode in his early life were known, his pride would be very sorely bruised ; why, he had made himself amenable to the law, if your grandfather had chosen to prosecute him. It is curious to think that many an uxorious poor fellow has tasted penal discipline for just the same offence against law and morals."

Cyrus seemed scarcely to like this suggestion. "That was not a revenge that would have suited my poor mother, who loved him to the last," said he. "Then, as you say, the truth was little known—the Chinelyn people knew it, but amongst Sir Philip's own people, I believe to this day only Lady Nugent and Lady Leigh knew it."

"Women are not often like Mary Hawthorne : her first fancy was her last ; then all her love fell to you and Robert. Ay, Cyrus she has talked to me sometimes, and she did so set her heart on your doing great things !"

"Don't speak of it any more : it makes me too

wretched. I could not have fared worse if I had stayed at Chinelyn, sowing and reaping in pastoral simplicity—or stupidity rather.”

“One can never rightly see what is for the best. I wish one could live one’s life backwards, starting with the experience. I think we should live it better,” Master Scrope groaned.

“Nay, I think we should scarcely have courage to live it at all,” replied Cyrus, forcing a laugh.

As the night drew in Cyrus shared the old schoolmaster’s tea and then departed. He had not told even him how he had been ejected from his lodgings, and when Master Scrope said good night and shut him out in a pelting rain, he little imagined that he was cast upon the inhospitable streets for the night.

Shivering, drenched, forlorn as a masterless dog, the young man trailed his aimless steps to and fro the streets until he had heard twelve chime from a dozen or more church steeples. The pouring wet had cleared the pavements, but, coming to the top of one of the streets running from the Strand down to the river, he saw a little knot of people gathered on the bank. They were

moving to and fro, and several policemen with their lanterns stood about ; at another time he would have passed carelessly on, but some singular attraction now drew him to the spot, though he had no morbid taste for the tragedies that excite the vulgar. Just as he reached the place, a drowned woman was lifted out of the water and laid upon the ground ; her hair and clothing befouled with the river mud, her limbs and features miserably distorted. Cyrus pressed forward with the rest to look at her, and through all that soil and weed of misery he recognised Laury, his poor little abandoned mistress. He shrank back and let them take her up and carry her away, but do what he would he could not rid himself of the glassy stare of those dead eyes—pretty eyes that he had seen love-pictures in once ; a pretty, frail, vain soul, whose greatest sin had been believing in him too credulously ! How much of deep guilt since, of temptation, of suffering, of hunger and thirst, cold and nakedness, had brought her to this pass where the dark flowing river was a refuge, only the Merciful knows. Cover her face, pity her and pass on ; Christian charity flings no stones,

but only prays: "O Thou who didst pardon Magdalen repentant, be more merciful to this sinner than her fellow sinners were!"

VIII.

Cyrus had left behind at the cottage at Chelsea one little heart which was all compassion and tenderness for him. Lola walked about the garden when he was gone, crying at the thought of his sufferings, until the pelting rain drove her indoors. She then told her aunt what she had seen and what she suspected, and they consulted together as to how they could benefit him; arranging finally that if he did not come again within a week or so, they would invite him to visit them, to recover his health in the pure country air. But Lola's recollections and presentiments were too much for her patience: she could not get out of her memory the ghastly pallor of his features, or the eager expression of his eyes, which betrayed long and grievous privations; and the next morning she announced to her aunt that suspense was

so intolerable, she meant to go into the town and call at Mrs. Mawson's to inquire after him.

"But, my dear, consider how strange it would look for you to be going to a young man's lodging," suggested her aunt.

"If he were well and successful, I should not dream of going near him; but when he is ill and in misery, it is another thing. You must not speak against it, for my mind is set on going."

"It has been a drenching wet night, and the streets will be horribly muddy; but if you are determined, I shall accompany you, Lola: for I hope I know what propriety is," said her aunt.

"And kindness too," added Lola, affectionately kissing her.

It was about the middle of the day when the two ladies knocked at Mrs. Mawson's door and made their inquiries after Mr. Cyrus Hawthorne.

"Oh! ladies, are you his friends? Then I am glad you are come!" exclaimed the landlady, who was looking dreadfully fussed and troubled. "There he lies upstairs raving and bemoaning, and I hardly think he'll live. But the old gentleman that used to come and see

him is with him now, and I've got free a bit to see after the house; but I've been at his bedside the whole night through, and I declare it pities one to see him."

Lola turned deadly white, and her aunt said, "Dear—dear! she never thought things were come to such a pass with him as that. Had she better see him?"

"He would not know you if you did, ma'am; for he has been out of his mind ever since he came home last night between twelve and one o'clock; and the doctor Master Scrope brought said he must be kept quiet. You see, ma'am, my husband began to think he never would pay us, and there was fourteen weeks due; so he said I must make him give up his room, and though it went sore against the grain, I did. He stopped away a few days; but last night, in that pouring rain, he came to the door, and says, 'Mrs. Mawson, you'll let me in?' and it was such weather a Christian couldn't have shut out a dog. Besides, I thought if he should go and do anything rash, I never should forgive myself. So I says, 'Come in, sir:' and he went up to his old room, hold-

ing by the bannisters. He seemed as weak as water; and when I followed him, he had sat down in his wet clothes, and was shivering and shaking so, he couldn't keep a limb of him still. So I told him he'd better undress and get into bed, and I'd bring him up some tea; but when I went back, there he was in the chair, crouched of a heap by the grate, where there wasn't a bit of fire: but I kindled it; and old Jane, who was here late charing, got him into bed, for there was no more help in him than a baby; and I kept her to bear me company watching him, for I didn't know what might happen; and this morning my husband fetched Master Scrope, and he's undertaken to write to his brother, for I hear he has a brother well-to-do."

"Yes; he has friends who would have helped him gladly."

"Then it is a pity but what they had known how he has been starving himself. Many's the time I've said to him, 'Mr. Hawthorne, you'll ruin your constitution living as you do.' For weeks, it is my belief he never had a thing between his lips but the poor bit of breakfast he

got here, which would not have fed a child; and though he pretended to go out and dine at two o'clock, often and often he dined none, poor fellow."

"Oh! aunt, how could he go on suffering so, and never tell us!" cried Lola, pitifully.

"When young men fall so low as he'd done, their pride makes 'em shy of telling their friends," said Mrs. Mawson. "Besides, they're always hoping that something lucky will turn up to right them, though it rarely does. I've a gentleman in my drawing-room who hasn't paid me a penny since Christmas, but whose own people are quite quality, as I can tell by the letters he gets and sends away. But he is worse off, to my thinking, than many a poor fellow who can earn sixpence by holding a gentleman's horse, or by running on a message. There's other folks pined and hungry besides them that stand in rags at the street corners, and offer you three bundles of matches for a penny. All the respectable lodging-house keepers could tell you that; and, for my part, I almost pity genteel poor folks most."

"What can we do for him? How can we help him, aunt?" asked Lola.

"We can only give Mrs. Mawson money to supply his needs, until his brother arrives. I wish we had him in our quiet little house to nurse and take care of. What a pity I did not see him that morning he came; I should have seen what was coming on, and could have kept him."

"Can he not be moved?" suggested Lola, eagerly.

Mrs. Mawson shook her head.

"Oh! no, miss. If he is to live, he'll live here, and if he is to die, moving him would only shake the little breath he has sooner out of his poor body. He was a fine, handsome, spirited young gentleman once, I daresay; but I think it would take his mother, if she is living, to know him now."

"I should like to see him; I have had some experience of sickness, but you stay where you are, Lola," said her kind aunt, and as Mrs. Mawson could find nothing reasonable to object to that, she led the way upstairs.

Poor Cyrus was lying in a bed hung with dark green stuff curtains, which half filled the room, tossing and meaning in fever. His glazed, unconscious eyes, his blackened lips, and burning skin, attested the fury of the disease that was consuming him. Master Scrope was sitting by the bedside with a basin of vinegar and water, continually renewing the wet cloths on Cyrus's forehead, and responding soothingly to his delirious complaints. The old man looked haggard and anxious, and, after slightly lifting his weary eyes to see who entered, he went on with his nursing office.

"Is this poor Mr. Hawthorne? I should never have recognised him—Lola might well be shocked!" said Aunt Manuel, in a low compassionate voice. "Mrs. Mawson, we must have the best advice for him at once."

"We have got it," interposed Master Scrope; "Mr. Welland is as good as any, and as he has not much to do he can come whenever he is needed. I would trust him for skill and care as soon as any of the great carriage doctors."

"I wish his brother were here!"

"He cannot arrive before to-morrow night, and unless he mends I am sorely afraid it will be all over then. Oh! Cyrus, my poor lad, I wish I could die for thee!" and poor old Master Scrope's frame shook with the violence of his emotion.

Lola was waiting at the foot of the stairs when her aunt came down, crying—

"We can do him no good, dear child," said she; "he is quite delirious, and there are kind hands enough about him already."

"Ah! miss, I would not fear for him so much; youth can fight through a deal," said Mrs. Mawson.

Lola's trembling lips formed something very like a request to be allowed to see him, but her aunt shook her head decisively, and said—

"Certainly not, Lola. Besides the possible danger and impropriety of it, my dear, I am always of opinion that where women can be of no use they are best away. Master Scrope is the most judicious nurse he can have at present."

Lola understood that there was no appeal, and turned away grievously, while her aunt gave

Mrs. Mawson some money for her patient's wants, and assured her that his brother was not a person to let her suffer loss on his account. Mrs. Mawson was glad to hear it, probably as news to avert her husband's vexation against her for cumbering the house with a sick lodger; and as she made no ardent protestations, but promised simply to do her best for him, and send a line by the evening's post, to tell his friends of his condition later in the day, they left the house convinced that he was, at least, in hands where he would not suffer by neglect.

Lola's heart was very downcast and fearful for him, till night brought a note with intelligence that the fever seemed to have a little decreased—at any rate, that he was not worse—when she ventured to hope.

"If he were to die, aunt, I should feel as if there were a want in the world nothing could ever make up," said she, mournfully.

"And yet, my dear, what is he to you? For four months you have never seen him until yesterday," replied her aunt.

"I can't tell, only I feel as I say."

"I think, my dear, you had best go to bed and forget him in a good sleep. You must not be romantic and fanciful."

Aunt Manuel was full of practical kindness and charity, and she was never known to say a harsh word to any living thing, but she thought it a grievous pity when any girl gave her heart away unasked. She did not possess the sympathies that draw out young dreams and thoughts in confidence, so poor little Lola carried hers to her pillow and wept over them in secret.

IX.

The following night, close upon twelve o'clock, Robert Hawthorne arrived in town and presented himself at Mrs. Mawson's door. She raised her candle to scan his face and asked:

"Is it Mr. Hawthorne's brother?"

"Yes:" he did not dare ask what news, but she immediately said—

"You'll find him a shade better than he was when Master Scrope wrote; the fever is lessened,

and he is sensible at times, but very weak. I doubt myself whether he will ever again be quite the same man he was."

Robert heaved a great sigh of relief and thankfulness, and asked to be taken up to his brother's room at once.

"Is that Robert?" said a faint voice as the door opened, and then the brother's eyes met.

Poor Cyrus was only the ghost of his former self; his fever-wasted frame scarcely lifted the light bed-clothes with its heavings; his pinched and pallid features had little of their former spiritual beauty; weakness had lined out the brilliant expression of intelligence from his countenance, which was blank and mask-like. Alas! alas! for this lost wreck of so much love and pride!

Robert grasped his brother's hot dry hands in his and stood by him quite silent, while Cyrus looked up at him with a sickly smile, and tried in a tremulous voice to say how glad he was that he was come. Master Scrope, who had had no rest for eight-and-forty hours, looked scarcely less wan than his patient; he greeted Robert

in a weary hollow voice, and then was thankful to yield himself to Mrs. Mawson's urgent entreaties that he would allow himself to be comforted with a basin of hot tea downstairs, and then sent to bed, lest he, too, should fall ill on her hands. The poor old man was so worn out with sleepless anxiety that he only made a feint of opposing Robert's claim to take that night's watching upon himself, who, notwithstanding his long journey, was so strung up as to feel no sense of fatigue whatever.

When the brothers were left alone together, they had a little low, broken conversation. Cyrus was incapable of more than a few sentences at a time except when the rising of the fever gave him a fictitious strength; but he lay with his pale eyes turned to Robert's face, fixing them upon him, though there were moments when all recognition seemed to fade out of them. It appeared, indeed, as if the lamp of life were dying down; as if the hours were swiftly passing when any care or any trimming could prolong its burning. At last, with a quivering sigh, they closed. Robert, for an instant, thought that all was over;—over

the futile ambition, the tormenting vanity, the longing, the aching, the sinning of a human life; and he fell upon his knees with a cry of, "Oh! my brother, my brother!" But that voice of exceeding love and pity struck even now some remote echo of Cyrus's heart, for he looked at his brother again, and this time with full intelligence.

"Do you remember the red rose that grew in clusters about the window of mother's room at home?" murmured he, smiling feebly: "I thought just now that I saw her standing under it, shading her eyes from the sun, on the look out for us."

Robert could not answer him for joy at first.

"When you are well, we will go home and look at it," said he at length. "It was grown into a mighty bush, and had thrown its branches along the cornice of the house when I was there with my dear little Lilian."

Even while he was speaking Cyrus sank back into his semi-lethargic state, and so continued until the morning, when he awoke conscious. The day had many alternations; Mr. Welland was in

twice, but no one could say from hour to hour whether Cyrus would live or die. Towards evening, rallying out of his stupor, he said to his brother,

“Oh! Robin, I wish it were all ended—there is no more good in me!”

Robert replied, “In God’s own time, Cyr; I pray you may live yet to do your work for your day and generation.”

Cyrus was silent for a few minutes and then said:

“I cannot hope it, Robin. Do you know whether my father is in town?”

“I do not know, but let me send and ask at his house. Yes, Cyr, in any event, be reconciled with him,” returned Robert, eagerly.

His brother made no opposition; so Robert went downstairs, hastily wrote a note to Sir Philip Nugent, and begged Mrs. Mawson to send a messenger off with it immediately, which she did.

As he was returning upstairs Mrs. Mawson handed him a nosegay of deliciously sweet-scented flowers, which she told him had been left at the

door a few minutes before by that beautiful young lady who came with her aunt to inquire after Cyrus. Mrs. Mawson communicated further that she was elegantly dressed, and must have stopped on her way to some entertainment to leave them and ask how he was. Her uncle and aunt were both with her.

"And it was pretty to see how she smiled when I told her that he was himself to-day and had his brother with him," added the landlady.

Robert did not guess who it might be, but he carried the flowers up to Cyrus, who took them with a smile, and buried his face for a minute or two amidst their cool and perfumed freshness. By and bye he said to Robert :

"That girl has more of my mother's heart than any woman I ever knew ; she is the faithfullest little soul, and the tenderest, and passionate and fervid as well."

"Of whom do you speak—is it that poor child Laury, as you call her ?"

"*Laury!* no, Laury's *dead!* Oh, Robin, Robin, if you knew all, you could not wish me to live. I bring sorrow on all who love me. Oh !

poor, poor Laury!" His voice took a tone of shrill excitement, his eyes glittered, his hollow cheeks burnt with reviving fever. In vain Robert tried to calm him, to persuade him to silence. He would speak of this unhappy woman; he would expatiate on her pretty winning childish ways when he first knew her; he would revert to days of idle pleasure in her company; and to that day when he had told her they must part, in a long, loving letter, which she brought to him soon after and flung back to him saying it was all lies, and whatever became of her, wherever he might hear of her, he was to remember that *he* was to blame for her wickedness and misery. Then he spoke of coming through the heavy rain to the crowd on the water's edge, and recognising her in the scantily-clad drowned woman who had just been dragged from the river dead.

"And they will thrust her poor body into a pauper's grave—perhaps even without a prayer, though she needs one surely more than they who die quietly in their beds. Oh! Robin, can you, can you prevent it?" he asked, eagerly.

"I'll try: Master Scrope shall go and see. But

they will read the service over her; Christian men would not hold her responsible for her act," replied Robert, laying a soothing hand upon his brother's forehead.

"Then *who* is responsible?" asked Cyrus. That miserable question was unanswered; Robert shook his head sorrowfully: and his brother turned his face away upon the pillow for several minutes.

"Have you no comfort for me, Robin—you who are almost a saint?" said he by and bye.

"Don't say that, Cyr; repent and believe. Oh! Cyr, give the faintest sign that you have put away those infidel errors that you relied on once; tell me you have gone back to the simple faith we both had as children."

"Nay, Robin, my faith is *not* simple."

"But you believe in God?"

"He has *forced* me to believe in Him."

"And in our merciful Saviour—in our Christian faith."

"It is all that makes life just or sufferable. Yes, Robin; in my misery *belief* has come back to me, but no hope or comfort with it. But Laury,

she had thoughtful little ways, nay, you would hardly think it, but once, when I was jesting at the Bible in my cynical way, she began to cry and dropped on her knees and begged me not. I am glad I did not laugh her out of her grave fancies. But she said, oh, in such a voice, "But for you I might have been good and a comfort to my mother, Cyrus."

Robert again tried to stem this outpouring, which, instead of relieving his brother's mind, seemed only to grow with the utterance; but Cyrus was not to be checked. The fever was burning in his veins as hotly as ever, and when he had talked to the verge of exhaustion, he gradually maundered away into delirious moans and complaints.

Robert spoke to Master Scrope, and gave him money to seek out where Laury had been taken and to bury her, that he might have that comfort for his brother when he again came to himself; and this duty done he waited anxiously the return of the messenger who had carried his letter to Sir Philip Nugent.

X.

A very different scene from the sick-room at Mrs. Mawson's was that in which Robert Hawthorne's missive found his father. It was a luxuriously furnished, wax-lighted drawing-room, fitted with every appliance of wealth and comfort—spacious, lofty, quiet, airy; the natural abode of the rich and liberal man.

For a wonder, Sir Philip Nugent had dined at home with his wife, and they were now spending a quiet night by their own fireside, with fair little Sylvie on the rug between them playing with a grand, good-tempered dog. Lady Nugent was sitting stately at work on some silken toy or other, and Sir Philip was scanning his evening paper with a double gold eye-glass held up to assist him; for though still a fine, erect, and noble-looking person, he had begun to experience daily little failures, which reminded him unpleasantly that he was not so young as he had been.

While they were thus silently occupied, the

stealthily-paced butler entered with a note upon a silver salver, and offering it to his master said the messenger was urgent, and waited his answer. Sir Philip took it up absently, and finished his leading article before opening it, while the servant stood back respectfully near the door. But as his eye glanced rapidly along the few lines it contained, a frightful pallor overspread his face, and, catching at the table to steady himself, he rose, saying :

“Phyllis, I must leave you this evening. Morris, call to the door the first hack-cab you can find—quick.”

The servant disappeared.

“Sir Philip, what has happened? what is agitating you?” cried his wife, approaching him hurriedly.

He handed her the note, and quitted the room without speaking.

Lady Nugent's first glance comprehended the contents, and when he was gone she stood up by the fire nervously beating on the marble with her fine white hand. Was Cyrus indeed at the point to die? She must have been more or less

than woman if she had endured no torture in the hours that followed. The children that had been born to her and had died had humanized her heart; she trembled and was very faint.

"Why are you crying, mamma?" asked little Sylvie, clasping her arms round her mother's waist, and looking up sweetly in her face.

"For no one Sylvie knows, for no one Sylvie loves," replied Lady Nugent, kissing her; and then she rang and sent the child away, unable to endure the innocent searching of her pure eyes.

And until past midnight she sat alone by the fire, weeping and pressing her hand over her heart. Was there still an echo of old pain there, or was it only prayer for her husband's unhappy son? who knows?

Sir Philip flung himself into the cab his servants had called, and with the messenger on the box by the driver they set off. In less than half an hour he was in Cyrus's confined room, grasping Robert Hawthorne's hand across the prostrate and unconscious form of his favourite son. Mr.

Welland also was in the room holding the patient's wrist, and looking serious and anxious. Sir Philip recognised his office, and after trying two or three times ineffectually to form a sentence with his trembling lips, he at last stammered out, "How was this attack brought on? What is his disease?"

The doctor thus appealed to replied, "By necessity, sheer necessity, sir; lack of food, nothing else! For several months past this young man has not had food sufficient to support the life of a child or a delicate female. Look here, sir;" and he uncovered the arms and breast of his patient, which were fleshless almost as those of an anatomical cast.

A shiver ran through Sir Philip's frame, but Robert reverently drew the sheet over his brother, and was grieved the doctor should have inflicted on the old man such useless pain. Yes, the *old* man. Nobody would so have called Sir Philip Nugent even an hour before, but now his countenance, attitude, and gestures were those of a broken old man, very weak, very miserable, and very helpless.

He made a struggling attempt at self-exculpation.

"It is his own obstinacy that has brought him to this pass; we have done our utmost to move him from his determination to live apart and free from us. We sent Mr. Miles to him; Tom Nugent tried to befriend him; my mother forwarded money to him which he returned. Even in his brother he has had no more confidence than in others. He had only to say a word, and I would have given him half I possess rather than he should have come to want. He knew I never intended him to cut himself off from me."

There was no answer. Not in one case in a thousand, perhaps, do we *intend* or foresee the bitter results to others of our vindictive, rash, or careless acts, but we are not to be held entirely guiltless for that. The little seed of evil, sown in a moment of passion, germinates, and buds, and blooms, and bears its fruit, and we must harvest it whether we will or no.

"Is there—is there great danger?" Sir Philip asked, after a pause, laying one of his long white hands on his son's forehead.

"There is always great danger in these cases," replied the doctor, in that honest yet kindly way which practice develops into the thorough trustworthiness of the family physician; "and it would be absurd to deny it in his. If he had not possessed a fine organization, a most remarkably fine organization, he would have sunk sooner than this, and even should he recover, his constitution has been so undermined, that all his days he will experience the echo of the suffering he has gone through in many an irradicable weakness and torture."

Mr. Welland had some of the impetuosity of a young warm-hearted man. He had heard Master Scrope's version of his patient's history, and was, perhaps, not averse to punishing Sir Philip a little through his remorse. He had his desire, if such it were, for Sir Philip sat down on the bedside, asking helplessly,

"What good am I of here? What can I do for him?"

"I had hoped he would have known you," said Robert, kindly.

Sir Philip bent over his sick son, and called

him by his name endearingly. There was no answer. Poor Cyrus's wits were astray in some fever dream-land, whence, for the present, no voice could recall them.

"The disease will have its own time, and its various alternations," observed Mr. Welland, somewhat touched by Sir Philip's expression of misery; "but as he has held out against it so long, I am inclined to think he will master it if saved from agitation. The mind has reacted violently upon the body, and there is now great pressure on the brain. I should almost advise your not meeting, sir, at present, even were he capable of recognizing you."

"You think it safer not?" said Sir Philip.

"Yes, I do."

"Robert, what do you advise?"

"The doctor's counsel is best. Cyrus was sensible when my messenger was despatched, or I should not have sent him."

"Then I will go home, I—I do not feel well."

He rose feebly, and Robert came round from the other side of the bed, to give him the support of his arm downstairs. Just as they were quitting

the room, Sir Philip's eye caught sight of a small desk, in which he remembered that his favourite son used to keep his manuscripts. The key was in the lock, and, stopping short, he said, eagerly, "Let me have some of his papers to read; let me have something belonging to him." Probably the request rose from a recollection of how often, when Cyrus was younger, he had laughingly refused to read anything he had written until it was printed; he fancied it would please him even now if he were to do it. Robert did not see why a request so simple should be refused, and the desk was brought down and put into the cab for him to take away.

When he reached home, Sir Philip did not seek his wife in the drawing-room, where she still waited, but went into the gloomy library, and had lights brought to him there. Confused and trembling, he sat down in a great chair with the desk upon the table before him. Lady Nugent had heard him return, and, after listening and waiting for some time, she at length crept slowly downstairs, and knocked at the door. There was no answer, so she opened it gently and went in.

Sir Philip was crouched down in his chair, with a wild glassy stare in his eyes, and a letter clutched in his hand. Phyllis looked at him affrighted, as he made a vain attempt to speak, and, bending near, she saw what he had discovered. Upon the desk lay some sheets of manuscript verse, a colourless mass of dead flowers, tied round with a tress of yellow hair, and several pieces of written paper. The letter Sir Philip held in his hand was that which Cyrus had called, in speaking to Robert of Phyllis's faithlessness, "a poor little lying letter;" evidently he had read it.

For a few moments she stood trembling in every limb, and faint as death; seeing him in possession of these relics, she thought Cyrus was dead. Sir Philip was incapable of any articulate remark, but she understood from the working of his face, that he wished to relieve her from this dread, and as her hand dropped upon the table near him, he laid one of his own upon it, and she thought he said, "Poor Phyllis!" as if he pitied her. Pride and fear gave her a certain resolution, and while her husband looked on unresistingly,

she gathered letters, papers, dead flowers, all together, crushed them into the desk, and locked it.

“Let me help you upstairs,” said she, humbly, when this was done—she did not wish any of the servants to see him in his present condition, but when he tried to rise he could not. She was obliged to ring for Morris.

The servant came in, and the moment he approached his master, he said, hurriedly, “Your ladyship, Sir Philip has had a stroke.”

It was true: the sudden shock of seeing his dear son in such deplorable misery, and the discovery of his wife’s letter together, had overpowered him. From this night, though he lived, he was never quite himself again; he was dependent henceforward on the affectionate attendance of Phyllis, or the care of servants, for every office about his person, and became a mumbling, crippled, prematurely broken old man.

XI.

Robert Hawthorne anticipated a second visit from Sir Philip the next day, but about the hour he should have come, a letter was brought to him from Lady Nugent, explaining the reason of his absence. The desk was sent back with it, and Cyrus never knew that it had been out of his possession, with its treacherous secrets, for an hour.

When he woke up in the morning, the first words he said were, "Robin, was my father here last night? I fancied once I saw him and heard him speak."

"Yes, he was here. But Mr. Welland advises you to be very quiet, and not to meet again till you are stronger."

Robert evaded any allusion to the intelligence he had just received, lest it should agitate his brother, but Cyrus took what he said with the indifference which frequently accompanies complete physical prostration. His pallid eyes went

wandering round the room, until they rested upon the flowers which Robert had put into a glass of water and set upon the chimney-piece, when they lightened a little: "Lola's flowers," said he, softly.

Robert brought them nearer to him, and while he was looking at them he said, that the mournful idea might cease to work in his mind, "Master Scrope discovered the place to which Laury was carried, and he procured a promise that she should be taken for interment to some cemetery out of town—he arranged all with the proper persons. The inquest was held yesterday, and the verdict was, of course, 'temporary insanity.'"

He spoke very quietly and kindly, and then, moving away, left his brother for some time unobserved. Cyrus turned his face to the wall, and was silent for hours, but whenever Robert glanced towards him, he always saw the same hopeless gloom in his eyes.

About noon came Mr. Welland, and expressed satisfaction in certain signs of improvement, which he immediately recognised in his patient.

"Get over a couple more days, and he will do,

then we will begin to talk of removing him," said he, cheerfully, at which Mrs. Mawson, who had brought the doctor up, retreated whimpering.

It was not easy to see whether Cyrus was cheered, or the reverse, by Mr. Welland's announcement. When he and Robert were again alone, he said, drearily :

"The drama is to have another act then ; I thought the drop-scene would have fallen here."

"Thank God that it has not," replied Robert, with affectionate fervour, and then, to divert his brother's mind from the contemplation of mournful subjects, he began to suggest to what place they should go first, to give him the chance of recruiting. Cyrus suggested "home;" he always thought of Chinelyn as *home*; and Master Scrope by and bye arriving, it was decided that that place should be their destination as soon as he was in travelling condition.

Before Cyrus was in a fit state to leave his room, Sir Philip Nugent and all his establishment had departed to Hadley Royal, so that any chance of their meeting again was, for the

present, put an end to. The early days of his convalescence were enlivened by occasional brief visits from Lola and her aunt; and his first removal was to the cottage at Chelsea, where Robert and he spent a week. The gentle nursing and pleasant company had a wonderful effect in dissipating the gloom and oppression which continued to hover over Cyrus's mind, but he was hardly grateful enough for it; he did not know how well Lola suited him, perhaps he never would know until he missed her affection. He used to call her his dear little friend and counsellor, and even then there was so much of the old leaven left in him, that he watched for the little pettish, impatient signs, by which her childish love would once betray itself, when he treated her thus coldly. But she had won self-command now, and gave him back smile for smile; and no one but himself could have detected the little lip quivering, which such smiles strove to hide. He was very exacting of her company, and took a cruel delight in seeing to what extent he could carry his mastery. She submitted with cheerful humility; she even laughed at him, and told

Robert that was always his selfish way, and she had ceased to mind it, but sometimes when she was alone she cried bitterly—bitterly. Perhaps you think that a young woman who loves more than she is loved deserves to suffer; I will not gainsay it, but only plead for Lola that her love for Cyrus had grown with her growth and strengthened with her strength, until it was far too vital a part of her being to be uprooted by the crisp fingers of discretion, or pruned back into chill friendliness by the steady knife of propriety; so I commit her to the merciful judgment of those who have felt in their own breasts that nature is stronger than all the rules of art and conventionality; at the same time, reminding feminine pharisees who are conscious of being themselves pure of all weakness, that, though it may be a grievous error in a woman to show too much tenderness of heart, it is a black sin, and the least pardonable of all, that she should have none to show. A very great deal can be forgiven, and ought to be forgiven, to those who love—and this saying is not new.

When Cyrus took his leave, he kissed Lola's

hands, and said, with a spark of his ancient mischief—

“Don’t forget me, Lola; I am not worth remembering, but I like to be remembered.” He knew quite well that she could not forget him if she would.

She did not trust herself to say much, but stood at the door in the sunny June morning, watching the preparations for departure with a rather pale face and a fast-beating heart. He stayed beside her while the luggage was being arranged, and Robert was getting into the cab, and once, looking long into her eyes, he said, “I shall not find a pleasanter little friend than Lola anywhere. Give me some flowers—I always like your flowers.”

She gathered a few—roses, myrtle, jessamine—and gave them into his hand, as he took his place beside Robert. They neither of them spoke; the driver mounted to his seat, the door was shut, and the cab moved; just then Cyrus showed his head at the window and cried out, “Lola!” but the horse sprang forward under a smart lash, and, whatever he wished to say

to her, it was not of sufficient importance for him to stop the cab to say it then.

"You are scarcely kind to Lola," said Robert, who had not been altogether pleased with what he had observed in his brother's conduct towards her. "I think you sometimes make her very unhappy."

"I believe I do, and yet I cannot find in my heart to wish that she loved me less," was the reply, and Cyrus put her flowers to his lips caressingly. If she could have heard that selfish speech and seen that little gesture, I think it might have soothed the burning pain which a night of tears could not quench. He had left Lola very unhappy indeed, and her aunt mentally registered a vow that he should never more of her will be made welcome at Chelsea.

"Lola is too good and beautiful to waste her youth for a man who does not love her, and who is not worth her if he did; I shall talk to Manuel about it, and we will find some one to marry her; there is more than one now if I am not mistaken, who needs only a shade of encouragement to adore her."

So said in her heart the practical aunt, but she kept her designs to herself, and Lola kept her sorrows to herself.

XII.

There is always more or less of disappointment in revisiting places where we have been young, happy, and hopeful; the place is not changed, but we who look upon it are. Cyrus and Robert came to Chinelyn in the sunniest season of the year, when everything was in its beauty; but Cyrus, after a couple of days in the fields and lanes, and by the shore, wearied of it. They went on to Arbon, and Robert made his daily pilgrimage to the two graves in the little churchyard on the seaward-sloping cliff; quiet graves, with the rosebushes overgrowing the memorial stones, and the great elms shadowing them pleasantly. Resting there one evening, Cyrus and Robert reopened more of their mutual lives each to the other than they had ever done since they were boys together,

living with their mother at the old Manor Farm; and, from that time it became impossible that they could ever again be alienated or separated. Cyrus acknowledged, at last, the utter vanity of struggling or rebelling against the fixed conditions of his life, and, though he might never conform to them as implicitly as Robert had done, he would probably thenceforward let them influence him less.

“We may compare ourselves to people who, from their birth, have been afflicted with a physical deformity; blindness, deafness, or a crippled limb,” said he, quietly; “we may *envy* the sane and sound, but we can never be like them, though our hearts were eaten out with mortification; it has taken me nearly thirty years to make up my mind to it, but I see it now, and know that we never can be as other men are.”

“But we may in some measure make ourselves independent of our birth-mark,” replied Robert; “I have done so: it is long now since I have regarded it with the feelings you do even yet. Lilian lived and loved me in spite of it; I have had days as happy as a prince; but I

can say truly that, to my knowledge, it never had any influence either on my actual joys or sorrows. If I had been heir to Hadley Royal, I could not have had a greater treasure of happiness than I had in my darling's affection in the dull old house in Maiden Lane, and I could not have suffered sorrow more acute if she had died and left me rich and idle, instead of still willing to do my share of work while day lasts."

As Robert spoke, the evening sun slanted down a red ray upon Lilian's grave, tinting the white roses with a living blush. Cyrus, glancing at his brother, whose last words had dropped to an almost inaudible whisper, saw that his eyes were full of tears. He was touched; hitherto he had thought that there was no trouble like his own trouble, but now he saw that Robert had had his bitter draught—that he had suffered too—suffered, perhaps, more deeply and more enduringly.

"She was very good, your Lilian," said he.

"She was the most loving heart! I could have let all the rest of the world go, if only I might have kept her," was the reply. "It is

nonsense to speak of loathing life because I lost her, for I hope never to loathe what God gives me to endure; but it was like the withdrawal of the sunshine when she died, and the world cannot ever again be what it was to me with her in it."

Cyrus was silent, and the evening faded gradually into gray twilight. The wind moaned over the sea, and the fog bank rolled over from the west, and blotted out the distant view.

"Shall we go to the inn? this is chill for you, Cyr," Robert proposed; and, with a few blossoms gathered from the graves, they left the place. As they went up the hill, Cyrus began to speak of what he should do when he had rallied from his weakness.

"There is hope in a life yet that has uncertainties and speculations," replied Robert; "but let it wait; do not plan too soon."

"No very sanguine hope."

"There is for you what has been and gone for me—the beginning of life with a strong and faithful love."

Robert alluded to Lola, but he did not men-

tion her name; Cyrus, however, understood him and became thoughtful.

"I don't deserve her; and, besides, she is deceived in me; she fancies me heroic, and would be disenchanted if she knew the truth."

"I am not sure of that, if you love her; but if her own beauty and sweetness have not won upon you, my words will not avail her."

"I do love her, but it is not the same enthusiasm as I had once."

"Perhaps not; but never despair of life or happiness, while there is a young heart devoting its first freshness to you. I advise you take it, give in return your best, and grow strong again in its youth."

The brothers had repeated conversations afterwards on the same theme, and it soon became evident to Robert that Cyrus liked to talk of Lola better than any other subject, though he still declared himself free from all enthusiasm of love for her; still declared that, in fact, he never had lost his head save for one woman in his life, and felt quite incapable of the same delightful insanity again. Robert used to think sometimes that he

wanted to be contradicted, and once he tried the experiment, but Cyrus shook his head gravely and replied, "It would not be right in me to take her; I should disappoint her miserably. I have not that to give which a fervent young thing like her expects. She would fancy me cold and negligent, and I should feel her exacting; in which circumstances there would not long be harmony between us."

"Then it would be wise and honourable in you to see her no more until she has had time to forget you, or has given her heart elsewhere," replied Robert, with sage coolness.

"That would grieve her terribly — nothing would grieve her more than to think I wished her to forget me; and I don't like to have the remembrance of her reproachful, sad eyes before my conscience. I know Lola better than you do, Robert."

"No doubt of it, Cyr; and therefore to all your other sins do not add the wilful destruction of her happiness."

Cyrus did not take the admonition at all amiss — perhaps, at certain moments, it was exceedingly

pleasant and soothing to believe that Lola's happiness *was* in his hands, to believe that he still possessed an influence for others as formerly. He had, through recent events, lost much of his confidence in himself, much of his vanity, ambition, and eagerness of character, but he had not lost his craving desire to be loved and appreciated, and probably he never would. The roughest experiences only modify a disposition; they can no more change it than climate can change the colour of the skin from white to black; a warm bronzing of sun and weather is all the transformation nature chooses to undergo, either physically or morally, and with such slight variety Cyrus Hawthorne after his troublous years was much the same at heart as the boy who dreamed dreams of impossible honour and glory by the seashore at Chinelyn, and was so exacting of his mother's affection.

XIII.

At first coming *home* Cyrus had manifested some disinclination to renew his acquaintance with the Fords, but Robert was so urgent with him that he conquered his half-ashamed repugnance to appear before these old friends in his fallen reputation, and one morning the two brothers called at the parsonage.

Mrs. Ford, sweet soul, almost wept at the sight of Cyrus, and after her husband had talked to him a little while, she got him away into the garden by himself, and keeping one of his hands clasped in hers, began to ask him if his mind was freed yet from the net of error in which so short a time ago it had been involved. Cyrus was inclined to smile at her suddenness and urgency, but she looked at him with such lovely eyes, and spoke with such real earnestness, that he tried to answer her as she would have him; perhaps, rather surprised that he could speak to a woman on such a subject at all.

"I am so glad, so glad," replied she, with a trembling smile; "so glad to hear you say your struggle goes on—there would be no struggle were not God in your heart still; and He is there, though a rebellious intellect prompts you to disbelief. Cyrus, when I lie awake at night, and think of those I love, and you amongst them, sometimes I feel as if my heart were bursting, but when I remember your mother's life—when I remember how she watched for you and taught you—I have felt sure, *sure*, that God would bring you back, and He is doing so now; her prayers could not be all lost, or lost for ever. When you are weak and tempted, recall her memory, Cyrus—recall her pain and patience; they should have a holy power over you."

Cyrus left her rather saddened. He knew of old that this good woman, who had stood for years, as it were, on the brink of the grave, had but one absorbing thought and hope. Already she appeared to live more in heaven than on earth, for her mind was there much oftener than here. Nothing, perhaps, tends to produce this spirituality in religion like the daily proximity to death; so

thoroughly did it pervade her being that no one could be with her many minutes without feeling it. And yet so little formal and obtrusive was it that it never offended any, or, what is commoner, excited a single breath of ridicule or sarcasm. People whose minds were the least easily moved to exalted sentiments always conceived a wondering reverence for her, and left her presence with something of the subdued feeling they would carry away when they had been treading on holy ground.

Robert had been absent from Walton Minster now for nearly a month's space, and Mr. Reuben Otley had twice written to know when he proposed to return; Cyrus was not disposed to journey into the north, and as he was now well enough to be left, the brothers agreed to separate for a short time. The Fords were going into Brittany for an autumnal holiday, and it was suggested that Cyrus might accompany them, if he were so inclined, and thought the change would be beneficial. Robert scarcely anticipated that his brother would accept the offer, but he did, and rather thankfully; his mind was too much shaken and

weakened to be able to apply itself, and he shrank from unoccupied solitude. There had been news from Hadley Royal that Sir Philip Nugent was no worse, and the family solicitor had been ordered to communicate with Cyrus as to what he meant to do, and to notify that the full allowance his father had made him formerly only waited his acceptance; but there was no hint of personal reconciliation, though Cyrus in his subdued frame of mind and body would not have been averse to it. Robert would have been glad that it should take place, but he did not urge it; and perhaps, both thought it might be less difficult and formal if deferred until Cyrus came down to visit Robert at Walton Minster after his return from Brittany in August.

Cyrus's last act before leaving England was to write Lola a long, detailed account of his proceedings since he left the cottage; it was a curious letter, contradictory and uncertain as his own behaviour, but she liked to receive it, though she would not answer it. He was a little piqued, and wrote again, but again without eliciting any reply. He did not understand this silence, and it fretted

him more than he could possibly have anticipated. What did it mean? Was she ill, offended, or what? He tried a third time, and represented himself as dull, unhappy, dispirited, because she forgot him. Was that, he asked pathetically, like the faithful little friend she had always promised to be? Upon which Mistress Lola wrote back, "Dear Cyrus, you were busy and cheerful, and needed no consolation when you wrote before: so I thought it useless to waste time in answering you, especially now that Uncle Manuel is ill, and wants more attendance than my aunt can give him. When you are in any trouble again, you can claim me, but I know I do not suit you for a friend in sunshiny weather; you have others whom you love much better, and I do not wish to take your thoughts from them, but you were a whole fortnight after you left London before you wrote a line to us—I do not count Robert's letters, *you* were our friend."

"Jealous little soul," said Cyrus, when he had read this; "she loses her humility and tenderness when she takes pen in hand—she would never have said that to my face."

In the course of the day he indited another epistle to her, reproachful, rallying, but more affectionate—almost lover-like, indeed; and after he had done it, he experienced no regrets, but rather an exaltation of spirit. He hoped Lola would answer that, but she did not. She cried over it, and felt indignant; he was ungenerous to play with her feelings, she said, and she would neither write to him nor see him any more.

She gave herself up to nursing Uncle Manuel, who was very cross and impatient in his sickness, and tried to put Cyrus out of all her thoughts—an effort that hourly defeated itself. While she was thus occupied, Mrs. Ford, sweet soul, was busy with her hopes of converting him, and happy in her good work. She found him sometimes very impressible, and sometimes very absent; at the latter times he was thinking of a dusk loving pair of eyes that were far away, and wondering if they were sad or indifferent in his absence, and how they would greet him when they should meet again. This consideration was beginning to take a very vital form and substance in his mind; even, at last, he grew to thinking of

Lola almost as much as she thought of him, and yet, with an unintelligible perversity of temper, he kept saying to himself, "I am not in love with her, but I daresay that is because I could never be in love with any woman again."

XIV.

When the Fords' holiday was expired, and the charms of Brittany were exhausted, they returned home to Chinelyn, and Cyrus went up to London, much more eager to discover the interpretation of Lola's pertinacious silence than was at all reconcileable with the avowed state of his sentiments towards her. The evening of his arrival his impatience bore him off to Chelsea through sultry August dust and sunshine, and coming to the familiar gate just about tea-time, he heard Lola making music in the pretty little drawing-room, the window of which was thrown open to admit the air. Stay—was it Lola? He stood still and listened—yes, that was Lola's touch on the piano, but who was accompanying her on the violin?

The violin was not Uncle Manuel's instrument. Very fine playing it was—exquisite—masterly—but still it need not have produced quite so much emotion in the listener's mind. Cyrus waited until the piece came to an end, and Uncle Manuel's gruff voice cried "Bravo!" at which there was a trilling little peal of laughter accompanied by a bass chuckle—the chuckle of the violinist, Cyrus was assured. He advanced and knocked at the door, bringing Sarah to it in a bustle; and as she let him in he saw Lola half way down the stairs with her pretty prying face looking over the balusters to see what visitor was coming in such a fume. She laughed and cried out—

"I thought it could be nobody but you!" and then met him and brought him into the drawing-room.

That was the only welcome he was likely to get. Uncle and Aunt Manuel received him with solemn frigidity, and when he scowled round the room in search of the violinist, that individual stared back with imperturbable German visage, and tenderly put his beloved instrument into its case and locked it up; a proceed-

ing which Lola interrupted with cousinly familiarity.

"Nay, Fritz, don't put the violin away ; after we have had tea you must let Cyrus hear you play."

Cyrus made no eager response ; he felt very little at his ease, for Uncle and Aunt Manuel, in inquiring after his health and his tour in Brittany, took pains to show that their interest was of the coolest kind, and even Lola, after the first impulse of pleasure, became quiet and simply catechetical in her conversation, though she looked rather sorry and unhappy. He was half in a mind to go away before tea, for here there was no chance of reproaching Lola for negligence and forgetfulness of him ; her aunt might have told him that he had no claim on her thoughts and had already received far more affection than was his due.

Violinist Fritz sat glowering at him with large pale blue eyes until Sarah came to say tea was ready in the parlour, when he took hasty possession of Lola's arm, and left Aunt Manuel to Cyrus—a disposition that enraged him. Considering that he was not at all in love with Lola, the

contempt and animosity he conceived for Fritz were remarkable; his jealousy was easily piqued it appeared, and he was as exacting in friendship as men usually are in a warmer passion. What right had Lola to have eyes, ears, or tongue, for any one else when *he* was there? Lola evidently did not take his view of the claims of friendship; she spoke quietly to him, but she was lively and pleasant with Fritz and easier and freer—yes, easier and freer than she had *ever* been with him. She was like all women, he said to himself—light and fickle as the wind.

After tea she did not rest until Fritz consented to play a solo on his famous violin, to which she listened with silent delight. Indeed, it was fine to see the stolid German face light up with enthusiasm, and to see how the musician triumphed, as it were, over his instrument; but Cyrus failed to appreciate his genius, and as the last strain quivered into silence he got up from his seat, and without a syllable of compliment declared that he must go. Lola looked a little startled by his abruptness, and he thought he would punish her for daring to like any one but himself; so when he

shook hands with Aunt Manuel, he said, in a careless distinct voice—

“I must say good-night and good-bye; I go into the north to-morrow, and my return is quite uncertain; it is even possible that I may remain there altogether.”

Aunt Manuel did not exactly wish him *bon voyage*, but she *looked* it, and so did Uncle Manuel. Violinist Fritz started at him as a curiosity of temper only to be found amongst the islanders who paid such magnificent sums for their music, and Lola gave him a trembling hand, and looked up in his face with grieved questioning eyes. She made a movement to accompany him to the gate as usual, but he put her back, and said, like an indifferent visitor,

“Pray do not take the trouble to come downstairs for me,” and to his extreme vexation she quietly said, “Good-bye,” and obeyed. They had never parted so coldly before.

CHAPTER THE SIXTH.

FROM DAY TO DAY.

"TOILING, rejoicing, sorrowing,
Onward through life he goes;
Each morning sees some task begun,
Each evening sees its close;
Something attempted, something done,
Has earned a night's repose."

LONGFELLOW.

I.

MANY things that were honourable in past times, offices that were venerable and of high dignity, have, of recent years, fallen into disrepute. There is something ridiculous in the idea of a Mayor, for instance. A mayor suggests a plumpy alderman full-blown; pompous, florid, and loud-voiced; a man of foolish decisions, empty speeches, turbulent town-meetings, and prosy ungrammatical addresses on public occasions; a man of feastings

and respectable excesses, a glory to himself and a mockery to his neighbours. Why it should do so I cannot undertake to explain, but I aver that it does; the populace has no reverence for mayors as it had in old times. It is therefore a rather courageous thing for a story-teller to do, but truth compels me to state that Robert Hawthorne served his adopted town of Walton for three consecutive years in the office of mayor, and served it well, bringing no obloquy upon the dignity in his time, but rather in that locality divesting it of its mirth-provoking reputation. He had it in his power to advance and introduce many beneficial changes in the place, and amongst other things he started the Mechanics' Institute, and endowed it with the beginning of an excellent popular library. The growth and encouragement of this institute was one of his especial cares long before he attained to the civic honours, for he saw in it an effectual means of improving the moral and intellectual tone of a class that much needed it. These institutes may have been disappointing in their results since, but at the time of which I speak they were the best means

of popularizing instruction which anybody could suggest, and Robert Hawthorne met with very little opposition in his efforts. At no period and in no act of his life could self-interested motives be imputed to him, and, though he might sometimes be mistaken and sometimes obstinate and tenacious of his own views, his intentions always deserved and won respect. He established evening classes with competent teachers, and his purse was never closed against any reasonable demand upon it. The members called him, amongst themselves, the patron-saint of the institute. It does not belong to this history to follow Robert Hawthorne with minute particularity into the later years of his life, but merely to indicate those more marked events which throw a gleam of light across their otherwise monotonous course. And in mentioning the institute I am reminded that it was on the occasion of a fête which celebrated the first anniversary of its existence, that he saw his father for the last time. It was during this month of August, while Cyrus was at Walton Minster, that the fête took place, and of its incidents I shall give some few details.

II.

The committee of the institute had obtained Sir Philip Nugent's permission to use his grounds for the gala, and had issued invitations for a small tea-party—three or four thousand or so—which had been very cordially accepted by crowds of the working population of the county, to whom a visit to Eurevaux Abbey was a treat of which they who walk in silk attire and fare sumptuously every day can form no adequate conception. People were more anxious for a fine day than ever for a fine St. Wilfred's. Would it rain? would it hold up? were momentous questions. Anxious eyes consulted the gray heavens, anxious ears listened to a certain whushing sound amongst the trees which, to the fearful, prognosticated rain, but which the sanguine would not listen to at all. Of course it would hold up. Cyrus Hawthorne declined the entertainment; but Robert took Dorothea Sancton and two of her brother George's youngsters in the phaeton, and all along the

Hadley road as they went were the laden vans, gigs and omnibuses, piled up with tiers of faces, all of them composed and solemn as it becomes working faces to be when they go forth to invest their hard-earned capital in so serious a matter as a day's pleasuring. There was a continuous stream of people on foot too; the smartest parasols, the most dazzling bonnets, the thinnest muslin dresses terminated by stout serviceable boots. Husbands and wives with large families of children who could afford the sixpence apiece for tea and admission into the Abbey grounds, where a concert of two hours' length was provided for the gala folks' entertainment; pairs of young lovers, looking spruce and happy; parties of agricultural labourers, decent artisans, detachments of factory hands; people, in short, of every kind and every degree below the exclusive. A few drops fell, a few clouds brooded mischievously, but nothing worse, and the day was so cool that there was not the shadow of an excuse for anybody being out of temper. There was not a cross face to be seen all the day, not even of those two boys whom Robert passed, mounted on one donkey

and progressing spasmodically at the rate of five yards in ten minutes ; they thrashed and grinned, and grinned and thrashed with good-humoured perseverance, quite sure that they should "get there enow."

A large field had been hired for the gala tea, and a vast tent, with accommodation for one hundred and fifty people seated at the tables together, erected. Mighty preparations in the way of spice-loaf, currant-buns, seed-cake, gingerbread, and bread and butter, had been made ; but when Robert and his party arrived only the officials were there, working hard for the entertainment of their guests. One shrivelled little holiday artizan, passing by the boilers that were to supply water for tea, bade them "keep up t' steam, for they suld be vara dry ;" and the steam was accordingly kept up with great spirit.

Perhaps Eurevaux never before saw such a vast number of perfectly well-ordered, well-dressed, comfortable folk trooping through its glades. Not a twig was broken, not even a wild flower pulled ; the grass was sacredly respected, and every foot kept to the gravel walks. Wrong-

headed people would now and then stand arguing with the guides stationed here and there to show the way, as to whether they had not a right to make short cuts just as they pleased, over grass, plantings of flowers, and through ornamental woods, never remembering that the tramp of hundreds across exquisitely kept private grounds might possibly leave a few tracks that would not improve them or conduce to a second permission for them to make their holiday there. Some of them could hardly be made to listen to reason, and felt themselves deeply aggrieved; but when the Abbey was reached and the music began, temper was restored to even these wrung bosoms.

The musicians had stationed themselves before the Abbey on the open green; the sun had come out then, and thousands were seated on the sloping grass around, listening with quiet enthusiasm to the pleasant strains. The Miserere Chorus from some fine opera, the beat of the bell wailing through the hollow aisles of the Abbey with mournful solemnity, and Handel's grand chorus "The Heavens are telling," were in that place most impressive and majestic. When the concert

was over, the bell-ringers from Walton Minster mounted into the old tower with their hand-bells, and rang a merry peal that was almost enough to stir the bones of the holy monks who had lain in the burial-garth for centuries out of the dust; and then the greater part of the crowd began to troop back to the gala tent for tea.

Robert Hawthorne, who had been chiefly instrumental in getting up the entertainment, had suggested to Dorothea and Mrs. Sancton and some other of his lady-friends in Walton that if they would consent to preside at the tables and make tea for the people, all would go smoothly; and this suggestion had been so cordially accepted, that at each of the thirty tables there were two house-mothers of the middle class, serving in most instances their own workpeople, and supported by young folks and neat maid-servants as waiters and assistants. Dorothea had bright-eyed little Polly Sancton at one elbow and one of the school teachers at the other, and made tea for full three hours in the midst of the most perfect harmony.

There was a little crushing outside the tent to

get in with the earliest, but the surging crowd was speedily quieted by George Sancton's ready little speeches, and the women with babies being admitted at a separate entrance was like oil on the waves. In the greatest press there was one pretty little incident observed by Polly Sancton, which shows how the mother's milk never dries on the lips of the hardest and roughest of men. A wee thing fast asleep was passed from hand to hand over the heads of the crowd unawakened, and a way made through into the tent for its mother to rejoin it; she having got so deeply entangled in the mass that the baby was not safe in her arms. Other incidents were more humorous. A very fat woman made her appearance at Dorothea's table in a melting state, and informed the company generally, as she received her welcome cup of tea, that there "wasn't a mossle on her left," though every one saw she took up the room of two reasonable bodies. It was good to see how they enjoyed their tea! Polly Sancton handed seven cups to one young man, who ate in a ruminative manner until his countenance shone again, and certainly carried away change for *his* sixpence. No doubt

there is a good influence in these meetings of class and class on even ground, though I know there are many who would fear to compromise their dignity, or bring their social standing into question, should they venture to share in a holiday like this, where there are assembled thousands of working folks ; and above all, a liberal sprinkling of those strong-charactered, plain-spoken, West Riding of Yorkshire holiday folk, who are said by those who do not know them to be so barbarous, so care-for-nobody, so "I'm-as-good-as-you" in their everyday garb and manners. But if these doubtful ones had been at Eurevaux that day, they might have divested themselves of all their tremors, for Lady Nugent was seen several times in the course of it driving in her low pony carriage about the grounds with one of her pretty nieces beside her, and Sylvie on pony back following with some more of her cousins, and they spoke of the gathering afterwards as being as quiet and orderly as a Quaker's meeting. Indeed, the mob were gentlefolks that day ; gentlefolks every one ; low-voiced, patient, contented, hungry, and thankful. They showed an honest, frank civility, which was quite

as genuinely polite as the orthodox bend of the back which obtains in the best society. "Thank ye'm," for a cup of tea from the plainest was the curt expression of a grateful feeling; for, from the gusto with which they imbibed the draught, they must have been "vara dry." Such hard hands, such brown faces, but such good faces there were amongst them! There was one little old man who had been elected to the arduous office of filling the urns from the boiler, who cried out continually, "Noo keep oot o' my sunshine!" and the phrase, though as old as the hills, never failed to excite a grin of applause. Fathers brought in little children, lovers came with their sweethearts, and now and then appeared a more stately group who were critical as to their tea, and evidently expected nectar and ambrosia for sixpence a head, but still felt they ought not to be dissatisfied, and came down from celestial visions to tea and spice-buns with very commendable resignation. After the tea—or rather during the tea—the so-called Clodhopper's band began to play lively dance music, while the young folks who could danced on the sward outside the tent,

and those who could not engaged in the various games. Nothing intoxicating had been permitted to enter the grounds, and the only person whose calling demanded his ejection was a man who had come with what the policeman described as "a bag o' tricks," which were confiscated, but afterwards restored.

Dorothea and her young people went away early in the evening, but Robert Hawthorne remained behind to see the fête closed. While walking about the grounds, there came up to him a stranger, a tall, slight man, a little bowed and round in the shoulders, and with a cheerful though sallow face. He was one whose expression said that he had not been accustomed to get his bite off the sunny side of life's peaches; he looked as if he knew by a (let us fancy) now dim experience, what a blissful thing it is for those who eat bread in the sweat of their brow to go free of care for a single day, to prank themselves in the sunshine, to hear music and singing-birds in the woods, and to see beautiful sights, which, even to the dullest, suggest something more than labour and sorrow. It was probably out of the heart of this experience

that he said to Robert, "I like to see the people happy, that is what I like to see, sir;" and then added, after a pause, "and what a little it takes to make 'em so."

They were still standing side by side, a great throng being gathered in front of them, when they observed every one becoming silent, and through the midst of the crowd, which parted right and left to let him pass, advanced an old, old man—few persons except those who had witnessed his rapid decline would have recognized in the thin, half-paralysed figure and wild-eyed visage, Sir Philip Nugent. In his serviceable right hand he clutched a stick to guide himself, and Morris supported him carefully on the other side. He was perfectly conscious of the respectful acknowledgments of the people, and bent his head in return with a shadowy dignity. Robert, who had not seen him since the night of his visit to Mrs. Mawson's when Cyrus lay ill, was struck with surprise and commiseration, and as his father immediately knew him, he advanced and, at a slight indication that it was his wish, took the servant's place. They walked out of the gala-

field together to a gate where Sir Philip's chair had been left, and Robert would have assisted him into it, but he said, rather impatiently, "No, no, I can walk farther;" and tightened his grasp on his son's arm as if he were afraid he were about to leave him.

"If you will get into the chair, sir, I will walk up to the house beside it," Robert said, kindly.

"It does me good to walk a little; Morris never lets me walk enough," replied the old man, querulously. "Robert, is Cyrus here? I know he is come to Walton, and I want to see him."

"He is not here to-day, but I will tell him and he will come over," replied Robert.

"Will he? or—or I can come to him; but there must be no delay; I—I want to talk to him."

They were walking very slowly along a turfed pathway, which was a private way to Hadley Royal, and on the farther side of the hedge of which was the road leading to Walton. The lane was all alive now with the holiday folks trooping homewards as cheerfully as they had come, and

with even more noise and hurry. Alluding to the fête, Sir Philip said, "You find a pleasure in this sort of thing, Robert—you, perhaps, even think it a duty."

"Yes, sir ; and it is kind in you giving us the means of gathering such a multitude together. Eurevanlx is the attraction."

"My lady said so. She has been driving about amongst the people, and has been greatly amused. She assures me they have behaved well, and have destroyed nothing. Powys was rather afraid of the Millburn folks."

"They have behaved admirably ; they are quite tractable when they are trusted, and they may be thoroughly trusted too."

The servant came up and said respectfully he was sure his master had better get into the pony chair ; Sir Philip still appeared unwilling, and kept his haggard eyes on Robert's face, but after a few more paces it was evident that he had gone as far as his feebleness would permit. His restless anxiety to retain his son near him was piteous to see, and Robert at his entreaty still went on with him towards the house.

"I want to speak more to you; I have a great many things to say to you," he urged. "You will come with me to my room; you will not need to see any one else. Morris, we will go round by the orchard to the east door."

And accordingly, avoiding the public entrance, the chair was drawn through the kitchen gardens, and Sir Philip was assisted out of it into that room which Robert had entered once some years before when the house was being decorated and prepared for the reception of a bride. His glance went straight to the picture over the chimney-piece, his brother's portrait, and Sir Philip, observing it, said, eagerly, "It has hung there always. My lady has been a good wife to me, but I did not know, on my soul, Robert, I did not know before I married her what there had been between them!" His paralysed hand struck up convulsively in the painful energy of his asseveration, and his whole frame shook with emotion.

Robert guided him to his chair, and said a few quieting sentences to the effect of how useless it was to reopen these irreparable grievances.

"But I would wish Cyrus to know," was the

hasty reply. "Why did he not speak in time? He never trusted me, though I loved him more than any of my children since. I did, Robert; the lad suited me; I was very fond and proud of him indeed."

Sir Philip paused, as a step was heard approaching, and the moment after Lady Nugent entered. It was growing dusk, and she did not, at first, recognise who was with her husband, but when Robert spoke she acknowledged him with stately grace. She was become a matronly, fair woman, gentle, dignified, and sweet-countenanced; Robert, in observing her, felt that his father must have spoken truly, in saying she had been a good wife to him.

"You have made this an exciting day, Sir Philip," said she, laying one of her dimpled white hands upon his nerveless arm; "I wish you would allow me to bid Mr. Hawthorne leave you now, and return to-morrow."

The old man looked up in her face with a sort of feeble reproach, and replied,

"You drove one son away from me, Phyllis, and made us enemies; you might leave me the

other a little longer—for he is my son as much as Everard was.”

Lady Nugent changed colour, but she still smiled, and spoke sweetly; turning to Robert, she said, in a half-apologetic tone:

“Sir Philip is scarcely himself at all times, sir. Will you ring for Morris?”

Sir Philip made no remonstrance when the servant came and offered him his help to the chamber adjoining, where the old man now slept, but he bade Robert follow also, and dismissed his wife with a short good night. She went away with a second hint to Robert not to stay long. When the door was shut, Sir Philip began to fumble for his keys, and made Morris unlock a cabinet which stood near the bed. When it was opened, he pressed a spring, and, disclosing a secret drawer, lifted out that portrait of Mary Hawthorne from which the copy for Cyrus had been made. He thrust it into Robert's hands, saying, hurriedly—

“Take it away, it is all I have left belonging to her, and I would not have it fall into their hands when I am gone. Tell Cyrus what I have said to

you, and bring him to-morrow. Come both of you; I have much to say to you, very much to say to you, but I forget it now—Morris, what is that? Who knocks?”

“There is no one knocking, Sir Philip,” replied the servant, respectfully.

“I tell you there is! open the door!” was the querulous answer.

Morris did as he was bid, and convinced his master that he was mistaken, only by looking into the passage and declaring it to be empty.

“It is very strange, some one certainly knocked. You are going, Robert? Well, good night—kiss me, my son, and remember to speak to Cyrus, I want him to know. You will be early to-morrow—very early.”

His fingers relaxed their grasp of Robert's hand very reluctantly, and twice he called him back to repeat with greater urgency his message to his favourite son: at last, when he was permitted to leave the room, Morris followed him out and whispered—

“Sir, I see a great change in my master; you will not fail him in the morning?”

Robert glanced back at the watchful figure crouched in the great chair, and suddenly returned to his side.

"Sir," said he, with moved affection in his voice, "if I have erred in anger against you, or withheld love to which you had a claim, forgive me now."

Sir Philip looked up at him feebly, and replied,

"It is my sons' forgiveness that *I* want; bring Cyrus here. Tell him I was very fond of him, and that I never knew until I found the letter from her—I may have suspected, but she was made to deceive me: but I always say she has done her duty by me."

He began to wander in his talk after this, and Morris hurried Robert away. His remaining longer then only did harm. When he reached home, he called Cyrus to him alone, and told him every particular of his interview with Sir Philip. Cyrus was profoundly touched by the description he received, and was as eager as his brother desired he should be to go to Hadley and be reconciled to his father. They settled to drive

over on the morrow, at the earliest hour they should be likely to see him, but it had been elsewhere decreed that this meeting and reconciliation never should take place.

The next morning, as the brothers were sitting at breakfast with Dorothea Sancton, the great bell at the Minster began to toll in slow booming minute strokes. Robert's colour went, and he glanced up in Cyrus's face. They were quite silent, but as their eyes met, tears flashed into them both. Just at that instant George Sancton came to the door. Robert turned and looked at him. "The minute bell?" said he, interrogatively.

"Sir Philip Nugent is dead," replied George, and shut the door and went out.

III.

Sir Philip Nugent was buried with all the pomp and circumstance of his state and station. *Cortège* of county gentlemen, procession of tenantry, and servants in full mourning, mutes and

feathers, velvet and crape—nothing lacked of the insignia of woe. Little Sylvie, crying because her mother cried, watched the funeral winding slowly through the shady avenues of the park, to the family vault in the church, outside the gates, and when it was lost to sight, jumped down from her post of observation in the nursery window, and was naughty because grandmamma Lowther had forbidden that she should go out to play.

When the procession reached the church, there was the Rev. Samuel Miles, in full canonicals and respectful sorrow, to perform the last offices for his beneficent patron, and it seemed to those who heard him read out the majestic words with which the ashes of Christian brethren are committed to the dust, that he enunciated them with deeper fervour for this great dead man than was his habit in praying over commoner clay. He was very fine and impressive, and perhaps the occasion required that he should be so.

But who *wept* for the dead? His young widow, who lost the splendour for which her youth and beauty had been sold? I think not; she *wept*,

indeed, but it was scarcely for him. His little daughter? Papa had been half forgotten in his melancholy sick room already, before they made such a grand show of him, and carried him away to be buried and forgotten altogether. His heirs? Nay, Tom Nugent was but a cousin, and he came into a glorious property. His tenants? Most of them held long leases, and carefully secured. His servants? They were ready to a man to cry, "The King is dead!" "God save the King!" for the same wages as the dead master gave them.

Then did none weep for him? Yes. After the courtesy mob had gathered in the church, there came his two sons, and mingled almost unobserved with the throng. They, who had perhaps as little cause as any, *they* mourned him; nature's voice spake aloud in their hearts, and they felt themselves sons of the dead, spite of all wrong never to be undone. And when the crowd of formal mourners dispersed, they stayed behind, and saw the coffin placed in the vault where so many generations of Nugents lay—no place there for *them*—no rights as children of the race, beloved though they had been beyond all others.

The road was all still, every trace of the funeral pageant had disappeared, when they quitted the church, and arm in arm retraced their steps across the fields to Walton Minster. They spoke little. Never, probably, in any circumstances had the penalties of their birth come so near to them as they came now; Robert, at all events, had never felt them so keenly. The only sons of their father, uncalled to his burial, less welcome there than servants and strangers, departing unnoticed and uncared for, whilst distant kinsmen and curious acquaintance trooped back to his abandoned house to listen to the solemn reading of the will, to make their stealthy comments on the sober satisfaction of the heir, and the crabbed disappointment of forgotten legacy hunters.

One of the first questions asked by the general public, when a great rich man has departed is, How has he disposed of his property? Sir Philip Nugent's will was county talk, and even newspaper gossip for several weeks. Hadley Royal being entailed on the heirs male, lineal or collateral, Tom Nugent succeeded to it as a matter of course, but he succeeded to nothing else, and

therefore *he* grumbled. He had expected a fine sum in ready money, and was disappointed of that. Only the year before, the whole estate had been thinned of its fine timber, and Tom Nugent was too discreet to cut down young wood, or the magnificent ornamental clumps of trees that adorned the park, so that for a year or two he would have either to borrow or economize carefully: he made people laugh by declaring himself poorer than before he inherited Hadley Royal, and contrived to work himself into a belief that his cousin had not used him well. For some time before he died, Sir Philip had lived very much within his magnificent income, and it now became evident that he had done so in the intention of providing for his sons. To Cyrus he bequeathed Ackhill, a beautiful little property in Warwickshire, consisting of a handsome residence, and five farms, which produced a rental of from eleven to twelve hundred a year, coupled with the condition that he should resume the name of Nugent, in addition to his own. A further bequest of ten thousand pounds in money was made to him by a recent codicil added to the will within the month pre-

ceding the testator's decease. To Robert also was bequeathed ten thousand pounds, and Redbank, a country house, old-fashioned, but commodious, about a mile and a half out of Walton Minster. The widow had the dower-house on the Minster hill, formerly occupied by old Lady Nugent, and three thousand a year charged upon the rents of Hadley Royal, and the only legitimate child, Sylvie, had the portion which in her mother's settlement had been set aside for younger children, with the further addition of ten thousand pounds, vested in trustees, to be paid when she came of age, or, in case she married before that, upon her marriage day. Old Lady Lowther flung up her turbaned head, and exclaimed, when she heard the terms of the will, that it was most iniquitous, and that unless dear Phyllis contrived to save something out of her dower-money, Sir Philip Nugent's only child and heiress would be little better than a pauper.

IV.

Robert's bequest was not hampered by any conditions, and though, perhaps, he would just as gladly have been without it, he speedily put it to good use. The church of Holy Trinity and the school annexed were his gift to the town of Walton, and supplied a crying need. Dorothea Sancton would have had him remove to the house on Redbank when it became his; but Robert was, in some respects, a creature of habit, and preferred to remain in Maiden Lane—the haunting remembrance of sweet Lilian hung about the old home too dearly for him to forsake it; and after this failure it became evident that he would never leave it permanently while he lived. Besides, he was near his business, near his chapel, in the midst of his workmen and poor people, all his occupations and interests were there, and he was reasonable enough to see that he would be less in his element, and less happy detached from

them. Cyrus reasoned with him on the subject, but Robert stood firm ; his roots had struck deep into the homely, middle strata of society, and he was too strong and old to bear transplanting.

There were a few who misunderstood his motives, and charged him with greed and money-craving, that he kept on at the manufactory, but his life might have contradicted that—or, if not, his death would. *He* had no large bequests to make in *his* will ; a little annuity to his faithful friend and servant, Dorothea Sancton, was all the future he provided for : if any wished to learn what had become of the hundreds and thousands which from first to last passed through his hands, they must have gone to the sick, the desolate, and the oppressed, for their information. *He* would never die a rich man, except in the good deeds that he had done.

Cyrus complied readily with the last request of his father—pleased and gratified, no doubt, to do it, and became Cyrus Hawthorne Nugent again with singular complacency. He had his regrets—and very acute they were for a time too—that the opportunity of reconciliation had escaped him ;

but he was satisfied that as much justice had been done him as the circumstances admitted of, and he conformed himself to his novel position with ease and dignity. He went through a formal interview with the new owner of Hadley Royal and his boys, but there grew out of it no real cordiality; Cyrus never could or did cease to remember that he was a son, and they but cousins, and the old jealousy, though stifled, never died. As Nugent of Ackhill, he had a respectable standing amongst the Warwickshire gentry, and he and they forgot as much as might be any original blot upon his scutcheon, but of things wrong from their beginning, and unalterable of their nature, there can be no real oblivion, and perhaps as long as he lived, strangers, in asking who he was, would be told, "Nugent of Ackhill, an illegitimate son of old Sir Philip Nugent of Hadley Royal."

CHAPTER THE SEVENTH.

A CHRISTMAS ROSE.

- "My true love of old,
 "She is my life, and my goods, and my gold.
 "Then come the wild weather, come sleet or come snow,
 We will stand by each other however it blow.
 "Oppression, and sickness, and sorrow, and pain,
 Shall be to our true love as links to the chain.
 "So love in our hearts shall grow mighty and strong,
 Through crosses, through sorrows, through manifold wrong.
 "How in the turmoil of life can love stand,
 Where there is not one heart, and one mouth, and one
 hand?"

LONGFELLOW'S *Translation from Simon Dach.*

I.

ACKHILL had been a pet whim of Sir Philip Nugent's ever since he bought it; from year to year he had spent a great deal of money in perfecting the house and grounds according to

his own good but lavish taste ; until, now that it came to his favourite son, Cyrus had nothing to do but to enter on possession of one of the most beautiful and complete places, for its extent, that the county could boast. Not unnaturally, he was proud of his inheritance—a very different thing it would be, living there in luxury, to grinding his brains for bread in a London lodging. The novelty of his position gratified him exceedingly, and, receiving as much civility from the surrounding families as unmarried young men with pleasant properties, handsome persons, and interesting characters usually do receive, he soon found himself quite at home in it. He was restored to the class of associates he had frequented in his youth, and they were the most natural to him ; some few, perhaps, to whom wonderful, exaggerated, romantic histories of his life and conversation had come, were, at first, inclined to eye him askance, but he soon vanquished their distrust, and won back his ancient reputation for being personally delightful, especially amongst women. He had a small but well-appointed establishment, and began his life

of bachelor squire with considerable ease, dignity, and success.

Is it possible that it bored him by and bye? It was very different to his youthful aspirations, certainly; but then who does attain to the summit of his aerial castles? He was sometimes as dull and discontented as he had been in his darkest days, and gave way to surprising fits of surliness. He had contrived to make it understood that he did not intend to marry, and this, perhaps, in some measure, tended to discourage the profuse civilities with which he had been, at first, welcomed. At all events, let him accept every invitation he received; let him go out hunting, shooting, fishing; let him read and write as much as he would or could, there still remained always a margin of hours unoccupied and very heavy in hand. He used to feel some of those weary disgusts which he had experienced in his Lancaster prison, and occasionally to long for a return of that struggle for bread in which he had already been so signally worsted. But these were only *thoughts*, wayward fancies, that came and went like shadows over sunshine; in

the depths of his heart he was glad that his good genius had taken the battle out of his hands, and made him safe from the want which had indeed come upon him like an armed man. This phase of mind was only a repetition of a very common one amongst men;—never content, always looking back with regret, or forward with speculation; and in Cyrus Hawthorne, from his youth up, it had been a distinctive trait.

His brother Robert came to see him; he also brought Master Scrope from London, and established him for life at free charges in a pretty cottage near the gates, where he was easily attainable to receive those outpourings of the restless spirit in his old pupil's breast; he tried his hand at village improvement; he first fraternized and then quarrelled with his rector, but still his soul was not satisfied. He visited and encouraged visits from the pleasantest people of his neighbourhood, but he was no more to them than a hundred others were; their ways were not his ways, nor their interests his interests. He began to feel that nobody cared much about him amongst these new friends; present or ab-

sent, he was quite indifferent to them; and this conclusion reached, he would gladly have exchanged their solemn dinner-parties for a cup of tea in the Chelsea drawing-room, and all the pretty graces and accomplishments of his new feminine acquaintance for one smile or word of little Lola's.

The vanity of the gentler sex has been an established fact for ages, but the vanity of the ruder is regarded as an open question still; and yet, and yet it has a force and intensity where it does exist, tenfold more tenacious, irksome, and exacting, than women's vanity. Theirs is easily appeased: a commending word, glance, smile, will make their hearts happy for a long while; but when it comes to such vanity as Cyrus Hawthorne Nugent's, the craving is perpetual. Sympathy and appreciation were what he was continually demanding, and being continually disappointed of: there was no one who could give them in such full measure as Lola, because no one had such an invincible faith in him; and this was why his thoughts reverted to her again and again, with an ever-growing desire to have

them back, when the quiet, every-day courtesy of friends and neighbours palled upon him. He wrote to her in the old confidential way, claiming her interest in all he did, or said, or thought. He told her how little real satisfaction he found in his present life; how, when he took his pen in hand, his ideas fled; how, when he tried to read, the spirit evaporated from the pages; how, when he went into company, he was always wearied. Perhaps his case was a little exaggerated, but he *believed* he was stating nothing but the truth. Lola said to herself, in reading the first of these epistles, "If he were one of us, I should think he was in love, but men are not to be judged like ourselves;" and the reason of his discontents remained a puzzle to her.

Cyrus never waited for her replies; but, when the spirit moved him to write, he wrote more or less diffusely; and, the exercise over, he always felt relieved by the outpouring. He had despatched three of these letters before he got any answer at all, and when one came it was brief, but very kind. Lola was sorry he was unhappy — what could she say to com

fort him? He should seek society that suited him for relaxation, and he should set himself some worthy task to do, and work at it with daily energy. She was sure that he would never be still unless he had some absorbing object of thought, some aim in life, that was noble.

"That is exactly what I lack," said Cyrus, as he read it; "but even if I possessed this noble aim, who would keep me up to it? Nobody but Lola's dear little self."

In writing to her again he mentioned Fritz; where was that famous violinist now? did he spend many evenings at the cottage in Chelsea? Lola answered these questions ambiguously, and extolled Fritz's playing with more enthusiasm than Cyrus considered that *any fiddling* could merit; he did not write to her for nearly a fortnight after, and even then he was rather sarcastic about the round-eyed German musician—Lola thought rather ill-natured also.

II.

As the winter drew in, and the evenings of lamplight and solitude lengthened, Cyrus's letters lengthened also, until they became quite voluminous, and must have absorbed a considerable portion of Lola's time to read; but she never found them too long. Aunt Manuel did, however, and too frequent also; and, after turning the matter over in her mind for several hours, she at last determined to do her obvious duty, and to speak about it. They were alone in Lola's room one evening after Fritz had been to tea and departed, and when Uncle Manuel was fast in bed, where illness had now kept him several weeks; so there was no risk of interruption to the lecture, which the brave but practical aunt felt *might* turn out to be a dangerous experiment.

"Lola, you are very unkind to Fritz," she began, with the abruptness which kind people often fall into when undertaking a distasteful task; "you were *very* unkind to-night. I wonder

how you *can* treat any one who is fond of you so ill!"

"What did I do?" asked Lola, surprised by the unexpected attack, but ready for defence.

"I am not prepared with a list of your misdemeanours, but you know what I mean—you do not *half* like him."

Lola laughed, took her aunt by the round white chin, kissed her, and told her not to be a dear old tiresome fidget.

"No, Lola, that is disrespectful, when I want to speak to you for your good," replied Aunt Manuel, extricating her face from the caress with a very mild attempt at severity; "and Fritz is so *truly* excellent."

"On the violin he is—he has not his master in the world!"

"Then why don't you like him?"

"Now, auntie, *don't* ask silly questions. Did you like Uncle Manuel for his big bass voice?"

"But for his big bass voice, as you call it, I should never have heard of him; yes, I *do* like him for it, it is his distinction."

"Ah! well, auntie! but I cannot like Fritz for his violin, it is no use trying."

"You are very unfeeling then; but I understand the reason of it; I am not blind—I *see*."

"If Fritz could play on fifty violins at once, I should not like him any better, and if you tease about him, I shall hate him!" cried Lola, flashing out into a moment's passion, and then laughing merrily.

"It is very wrong in you to speak of hating anybody, but many things are changed since I was taught my catechism. When I was a girl, it would have been thought highly improper to be receiving three and four immensely long letters in a week from a gentleman, unless he were an engaged lover—yes, Lola, it would *indeed*."

Aunt Manuel softened her habitually gentle voice at the last words, because Lola had changed colour and drooped her eyes shyly as if she were hurt.

"But we have been *friends* so long," pleaded she, apologetically.

"True, my love; but has not such friendship a great risk for you? He is safe; men never

change the affection which has become habit for a warmer passion, but sometimes women do."

"You need not be afraid for me, auntie. I know all Cyrus wants from me, and he knows that I know it," replied Lola, with unconscious dreariness of voice and manner. "I am very happy as I am, only don't tease me about Fritz."

"I will not; but, my dear, give up the letters."

"There is nothing in them—you may read one if you like;" and Lola drew Cyrus's last letter from her bosom, which was where she generally wore those documents.

Aunt Manuel frowned a little, and asked her if she had no pocket, but she put the epistle away, and declined to pry into the writer's affairs.

"It was not written for my eyes, Lola, and I had rather not read it; besides, my spectacles are downstairs: but I feel that it is only right I should reason with you, and tell you my opinion of this young man." Lola winced, but Aunt Manuel went on—"He is very selfish and vain, whatever his virtues may be, and I do not deny that he has some; he will not let you go, and yet it is quite evident that he does not love

you as men love the women they desire to marry."

"Oh! auntie, never mind. If I don't care, you need not!" expostulated Lola, trembling all over.

"My dear, I *must* care, when there is that excellent Fritz longing to open his mind to you; he spoke to me yesterday."

"But I shall never marry Fritz, auntie, and you may tell him so."

"*Never* is a long day, Lola. Your views would change if there were no more of those letters to trouble you, but as long as they go on arriving every other morning, you cannot help buoying yourself up with the idea that he will come to like you more by and bye."

"No; I don't think anything of the kind, I am quite sure I don't!" Oh, Lola! Lola!

Aunt Manuel shook her head over the earnest denial very solemnly, and hoped it was a conscientious one.

"I wish you would never mention Cyrus to me again," said Lola, impatiently; "it does no good. We understand each other, but no one

else ever will understand us. Why cannot we go on being friends as we always have been, unmeddled with?"

"But poor Fritz?" suggested Aunt Manuel, timidly.

"Poor Fritz is nothing to me."

Lola turned away with a petted lip, and, as she kept her face averted, there was reason to suppose that she was crying. Aunt Manuel got up and kissed her affectionately, already repenting her interference; and, for a minute or two, Lola hid her face on her shoulder and sobbed like a scolded child.

"There, there, I did not want to make you unhappy," said her aunt, caressing her; "only don't be so cross with Fritz, and now go to bed and get a good sleep." And with a few forgiving kisses they said good night.

And poor little Lola, with the letter in her hand, sobbed herself to sleep very miserably. I desire to forestall any observation that may be made as to her folly by admitting at once that her aunt Manuel did not lecture her half severely enough.

III.

To the sarcastic letter about violinist Fritz, Lola sent no answer, neither did she reply to those that followed it. In fact, she had not much to tell Cyrus—she could not speak of herself, lest she should betray sentiments for which he might condemn her; and of her outward doings there was little to say. Uncle Manuel still continued ill, and she had, by her aunt's request, declined all concert engagements for the winter; that sober respectable woman would have had her pledge herself never again to appear in public, but Lola would not do this.

"If I am not to be happy, I will be famous," said she, in her heart; and to deaden her pain she resumed the study of the operas and plays which she had never quite relinquished, and told Cyrus in one of her short and rare letters that the ancient ambition of being an actress was returning upon her again strongly. In answer to this came an impetuous remonstrance from Cyrus; "modesty of

her sex, outrage to feminine delicacy, unfitness," figured largely in his phrases; for a *friend* he took too much upon himself, but it was clear that in his own mind he possessed a sort of proprietorship in all Lola's thoughts, designs, and doings;—if he had been guardian, brother, or affianced lover, he could hardly have expressed it more decisively.

Lola rallied him in her reply to this, and told him, what he ought to have remembered, that she had to be her own bread-winner, and that when her engagement with Uncle Manuel terminated, which it would very soon do, she should have to come to some decision for her own future; she should be sorry to do anything he disapproved, but she had only *one* talent, and that she must use; besides, they were in different spheres of life now, and he must cease to expect the same unity in their friendship; what either did ought not longer to influence the other—"for, indeed, I think, Cyrus, we are going two separate ways, and shall never meet any more as we did once," said she. It was a courageous little letter—not plaintive or melancholy or pathetic, but very quiet and sensible and reason-

able. Lola had taken *such* pains to write it, to keep out of it every expression that might seem reproachful or sad; but somehow the effort betrayed itself, and touched Cyrus to the quick.

He sat pondering over it one night, and arguing the case closely against himself. He had *tried* to win her affection, he *had* won it, and—and he really liked her better than any woman in the world; why should he not go farther, and seek her for his wife? Then he recalled the soft depths of her eyes, where every thought of her heart mirrored itself—thoughts he had read and delighted in and triumphed over often: poor little Lola, he had been very unkind to her! Then her caressing voice, the sweet mobility of her lips, the pretty passionate impatience of her frown and quivering delicate nostril—she was very lovely, but did *he* love her? Not as she deserved to be loved assuredly.

He glanced round the room in which he was sitting alone; very cheerful of itself, but to him dull inexpressibly; he wanted some companion always there—some one, even if it were only to remark how the December wind howled over the garden,

and how loud the rain drove against the windows. Well, Lola would do for that. She was not his fair ideal of old, neither was *he* the hero of old; but if she would marry him, they might be very well contented together: already they had a strong affection of habit, already they knew each other's ways and opinions, and would have fewer disappointing discoveries to make than is often the case with married lovers. He sighed over the document that had induced this sober train of thought, and wondered that his life should come to such an unromantic consummation.

Some one has said that men never ardently love what they have never ardently desired; and indeed, with most of them it seems true—certainly it was with Cyrus Hawthorne. There had been no exciting hindrances to intensify his affection for Lola. All had flowed on smoothly, until he was as used to her sympathy as he was to one of his own members; and possibly the loss of it might have affected him almost as closely. He had professed to Robert his unworthiness of Lola's youth and freshness, but he did not believe it—not at his heart: Perhaps if he had

any lurking distrust, it arose out of a fear that he was about to make a sacrifice of himself, and that when it was offered up he might come to repent it. No defeats and no experiences are great enough to cast out the legion of vanities that possess some masculine hearts.

IV.

Two days later Cyrus Hawthorne presented himself at the cottage at Chelsea, and was admitted. The drawing-room was unoccupied when he went in, the fire was low, the piano closed, the music piled up in order as if it had not been disturbed for weeks. The house was very quiet, and the thick snow which lay out of doors deadened the external sounds. Though there was an air of chill and formality about the room, there was no neglect. The vases were dressed with Christmas branches of red-berried holly, and the little basket on Lola's work-table was heaped with her belongings—Cyrus's last letter peeping out from beneath her handkerchief. A book was lying on

the couch where she had been sitting; he took it up, and found that it was Schiller's *Marie Stuart*. He was just reading Fritz's name on the title-page, when the door softly opened and Lola came in.

"Uncle Manuel is very ill," said she, and Cyrus saw with a certain pity that her eyes were weary and dull with tears and watching—"very ill, and my poor aunt is in great distress. You must not keep me long, Cyrus. Are you making any stay in London?"

"That depends, Lola. I am sorry for your trouble; I wish I could do something for you," and Cyrus sat down beside her; her quiet, sorrowful greeting had chilled him—it was not *his* Lola who looked so grave and anxious, so little eager and glad to see him.

"I am afraid you cannot," replied she, twisting her slender hands nervously; "unless you could make him well."

"And you have other friends—you have violinist Fritz——"

"Fritz is gone back to Munich."

"You are unhappy, Lola? Tell me all about

it." Cyrus's tone warmed; he took one of the restless little hands, and held it fast.

"Not unhappy, Cyrus; distressed and pained to see Uncle Manuel suffer, and a little tired with sitting up of nights—that is all."

"Then you must let me try to comfort you as you have comforted me many a time—as you will comfort me many a time again. What do you mean by writing that we are going different ways, and cannot any more be the same friends as formerly? I feel no desire to change, unless it be to make you more than ever my own—my *very* own, Lola." He bent down to peer into her sweet eyes, which were turned away from him and full of tears.

"That is not the way to comfort me, Cyrus," said she, with trembling lips; "don't let us speak of ourselves now."

"But I came for the purpose. Have you no confidence in me, Lola?"

"What confidence should I have in you, Cyrus?" and the great, soft, reproachful eyes looked straight into his.

Cyrus was startled, and stammered—

"I love you dearly, Lola—no one so dearly.

I had begun to hope that we might spend our lives together; I came to offer you the best I had to give."

Lola was silent.

"No answer, Lola?" pleaded he, in a tone of touching humility, as she drew away her hand.

"It is a mistake, Cyrus; you do not love me; and it is unkind to come and tease me, now that I have other troubles to bear. We will be friends still, if you like; but I am young, and should break my heart to know that you *endured* me only as anything else."

"What do you expect from me in proof of my love?" cried Cyrus, rather angry; "these are not the days when lovers are condemned to gather posies from the side of dangerous gulfs, or to make a crusade against wild beasts, in testimony of their devotion."

"I think, Cyrus, you came to insult me!" and this time Lola's lip trembled with passion instead of sorrow. "You can go! I will never see you any more!" And the next moment he was alone.

The self-confident young man left the cottage

quite subdued and bewildered by this unexpected issue of his visit; his wildest anticipations had not foreseen repulse so complete and decisive. The indignant pride that had flashed into Lola's countenance was very different from the childish petulance she used to betray aforetime when he vexed her. He began to perceive that he *had* insulted her by the presumption that her fondness for him was so infatuated that, like a bondswoman, she would gratefully accept any little dole of affection it pleased his gracious mastership to extend to her. And, indeed, he began to ask himself what fairness was there in the exchange he offered her? A life for a life, a heart for a heart? Nay; not so! "The best he had to give" was so poor and indifferent that it might well challenge the scorn of youth and purity, and yet he offered it with the affronting condescension of a sovereign to a slave.

But though momentarily subdued and bewildered, he was not conquered; the repulse, indeed, had given an interest and piquancy to the pursuit which it had not possessed before. "Poor little Lola! I know she loves me all the time," said he,

soothingly, to himself; "but I was like a savage, and she was right to rebel." Nevertheless, eager to recover lost ground and re-establish his former sway, the following morning again found him on his road to Chelsea. Coming to the garden gate, he saw the parlour shutters closed and all the blinds drawn down in the upper rooms; it flashed into his mind that Señor Manuel was dead. Instead, therefore, of rousing the echoes of the lane, as his custom was, he went quietly round to the back-door, where Sarah immediately came to him with her apron at her swollen eyes.

"Master died last night," she told him, "and her mistress was in a sad way, but Miss Lola had got her to lie down and try to take a little rest. Miss Lola was in the drawing-room, she believed, and nearly worn out with attending on both of them."

Cyrus begged the servant to carry her a message from him, but she returned saying that Miss Lola thanked him very much for his kind inquiries, but she could not see any one. Sarah said she was *too ill* to see any one.

"Did you make her understand who it was?"

Cyrus asked, very unwilling to accept this answer.

"Oh! yes, sir. She said, 'Tell Mr. Hawthorne that it is impossible I should see him.'"

"But, Sarah, it would do her good to be roused; let me steal quietly upstairs and come upon her unawares."

"You are almost like a relation to her, sir, but she spoke very plain."

"Never mind, Sarah, I will take it all upon myself;" and, passing the hesitating servant by, he strode lightly and swiftly upstairs. The drawing-room door was ajar, and he saw Lola before he entered. She was sitting upon the floor with her arms tossed across the couch, and her face buried upon them, sobbing bitterly. In a moment he was beside her, saying he hardly knew what—reproaches, caresses, protestations, all with comforting intent, but violent, incoherent, impetuous.

"Cyrus," said she, gently freeing herself from his arms; "go away. I am not able to speak to you now."

"I do not want you to speak to me, I only

want you to know that I would give all my life to console you. It is cruel to drive me away when I would return a tithe of the kindnesses you have done to me : it makes me miserable, Lola."

"I will not forget that you are grateful, Cyrus ; but I wish you would leave me."

"Sincerely, Lola ? Then all our old friendship is to go for nothing ? The first day that it is needed you will none of it ?"

"Cyrus, do you not see you are urging me past my strength ? I have had no rest night or day for a week——"

She looked up at him pitifully with eyes dim with tears, and then turned slowly away convulsed with weeping.

"Oh ! Lola, Lola," cried Cyrus, snatching one of her hands and kissing it passionately, "forgive me yesterday—I was presumptuous and absurd, but I love you—believe *that* at least."

"Go away, go away ; I cannot bear it, Cyrus ; you are unfeeling for me—nay, you always were, but you might spare me now ;" and she wrenched herself from him, and walked to the farther end of the room.

He stood looking at her pallid cheeks, heavy eyes, heaving bosom, until a profound pity touched him—he was unkind, hard, selfish, to choose such a moment to plead any cause of his own, and yet he had some lurking prescience that after he had left her she would feel more content that he had been. Neglect would have hurt her more keenly than over-persistence. After a little longer hesitation, he said :

“ Good bye, Lola, since I trouble you ! ”

“ Good bye, Cyrus.”

When he was gone, the poor girl crouched her weary limbs upon the sofa, drew the duvet over her feet, and in the midst of thinking of him fell into an exhausted slumber which lasted several hours. She awoke more collected, and her first thought flew straight to him—“ If he only loved me.”—Then with a quick self-reproach she remembered her widowed aunt, and, shedding back her hair from her heated face and eyes, she sought her in her chamber.

Uncle Manuel had not been the most amiable of relatives in his lifetime: but these two women found in him much to regret; his wife had always

dutifully admired and obeyed him, and Lola, while resisting occasionally the pressure of his authority, had given him credit for wishing her real advantage and success. Therefore they sat together talking about him and endowing him with many imaginary graces, until they felt the relief of having done his memory the justice which had not invariably been accorded to him while he was still with them. They were interrupted by one of those prosaic incidents that intermeddle with the most solemn circumstances of life—the arrival of Aunt Manuel's dress-maker ; and when she was gone, the widow felt equal to speaking of more ordinary events.

“ Sarah tells me Mr. Hawthorne has been here, and that he *would* see you, Lola ? ” said she, interrogatively.

“ Yes.”

“ It was kindly meant in him, I dare say.”

“ Yes.”

“ If poor Fritz were in London, he would come to your uncle's funeral ; he had a great respect for him.”

“ Yes.”

Aunt Manuel sighed; Lola never was a good gossip, and now she looked too preoccupied for anything beyond monosyllables. The widow was relieved when Sarah came in with her wordy condolences, and her niece lapsed into a long, drear reverie, the secret burden of which was—
“Oh! if he only loved me!”

V.

Every day during the week that Uncle Manuel lay dead in the house, Sarah brought up to Lola kind inquiries from Cyrus Hawthorne, but he no more forced his way into her presence. The day after the funeral, she and Aunt Manuel talked of their future arrangements. The former proposed to give up her cottage at Chelsea and return to Canterbury, where most of her own relatives congregated, and she was desirous that Lola should accompany her; but Lola said she thought not.

“*Why* not, my dear? you are welcome to a share of all I have,” persisted Aunt Manuel, kindly.

"I must rely upon myself some day, and therefore I would rather begin at once while my uncle's friends remember me," was the reply.

"That is a more practical reason than I should have expected from you, Lola; you have great good sense when some fancy or passion does not blind you. But, my love, will you let me ask you one question? Do you mean to allow Cyrus Hawthorne to remain on the same terms with you as formerly? because it is most unwise——"

"I do not; it is not possible any longer."

"Lola, has he asked you to marry him?"

"Yes."

"Well, my dear——" and Aunt Manuel paused for explanation.

"Nothing more, aunt," replied Lola, half turning away.

"How, nothing more, Lola? What do you mean?"

"He does not really love me, and I shall never give myself away to a man who does not love me."

"But what do you want? Is not his desiring to marry you a sign that he loves you?"

"No—he takes pity on me; he is grateful, and

would be generous; but there is a difference between that and love."

"Now, I call that truly contrary, Lola. Do you suppose that at thirty a man is to be as ignorant, enthusiastic, and new as yourself at seventeen? Are you jealous that he has liked other people before you? That is very weak and foolish!"

"I am not jealous of any one whom he has liked before, but I should be very jealous of a divided affection now. Besides, do you think I could not tell if he loved me?"

"You young girls are always full of romantic, impossible expectancies, and that is the reason there are so many disappointed, dissatisfied, and unhappy wives in the world. You are truly attached to Cyrus, and it is clear that he cannot do long without you—that is a solid foundation for happiness. It is what your uncle Manuel and I had—you saw it yourself. When could he dispense with me? Why, I was wife, sister, servant, mother, all in one to him; and I assure you, my dear, I think, from my own experience, that that wife is the best off whose husband

does find in her a collected edition of woman-kind, as it were, and they are the most treasured wives too. Picture to yourself how lost your uncle Manuel would have been if I had happened to die the first!"

"But I am young, aunt; and it is natural that I should wish to be loved for myself."

"Then, my dear, all I can say is, you should have listened to Fritz."

Lola thought Aunt Manuel peculiarly aggravating, but she lowered her arms and retired defeated from that contest.

"You had better make up your mind to go to Canterbury with me for six months," by and bye said Aunt Manuel, returning to the original question in dispute; "that will give you time to reflect and settle matters as you would never do now. Important steps should never be hasty steps, especially when they are irretraceable."

"We have still a week or two to remain here."

While Lola was speaking, Sarah came to the door:

"Mr. Hawthorne's kind regards, and he wishes to know how the ladies are to-day?"

"Is he to come in, Lola?" asked Aunt Manuel, in a subdued voice, and as Lola coloured and hesitated she turned to Sarah and said, "Tell Mr. Hawthorne he may come in if he pleases."

Lola went to stir the fire and was thus employed when Cyrus entered, so that as she turned to greet him there was an excuse for the deep crimson flush upon her face. She did not say anything that was audible; and immediately turning away, left him to talk to Aunt Manuel. Cyrus, glancing towards her soon after, saw that she was very pale, but her countenance had lost the wan desolateness of expression which it wore at their last meeting; she had taken up some work, and he could not help noticing how her little hands shook as she held it. He longed to take them in his, and see her look at him again with the old confidence and affection; for he could not make up his mind to believe that he had lost them for good and all, though there were no signs of their survival. He was not encouraged to remain long, and the beautiful, faithful eyes which he had learned to read so thoroughly, gave him no chance of looking into their depths,

even at parting. Lola would not meet his questioning gaze, or give him the slightest response.

But that night she received her first love-letter—urgent, pathetic, reproachful, tender, foolish, tautological, as such documents mostly are, but for all that pleasant enough. She blushed over it and cried over it no little, and said to herself how wrong and unkind it was of her to try to quarrel with Cyrus; “for if he only *loves* me,” added she, with an unconscious change in the time of the verb, “if he only loves me, I am sure I love *him*.”

VI.

Before finally removing to Canterbury, Aunt Manuel said, that, winter though it was, she should like to go down to the sea for a short time, as well for Lola's sake as for her own. Lola wanted bracing up after their recent watching and anxiety, and a thorough, idle change would be the best of remedies for her. Lola did not gainsay it, and accordingly, one morning about

a fortnight after Uncle Manuel's burial they went off to Hastings. As they had no friends there, perhaps it was not altogether matter of regret that Cyrus Hawthorne journeyed down also and took lodgings convenient to theirs; which arrangement led naturally to their being very much together, Lola and Cyrus taking walks upon the breezy cliffs, almost always in company; from which, let it be understood, a mutual good understanding was re-established.

How it had been brought about I cannot explain; I think it grew insensibly out of that letter—love-letter—and the frequent meetings that followed it. How is it possible for two young people to wear aggrieved countenances when their hearts are singing for joy, or to be sullenly dignified towards each other when they are possessed by a holy spirit of forgiveness? It was not in Lola's nature to be angry long with any one whom she loved, and I am willing to allow that Cyrus made his peace too easily; but it must be acknowledged that it *was* made; that the Christmas rose of his life bloomed for him fairly, frosts, winds, rains, blights notwith-

standing. Everybody does not get his deserts in this world, or he would have had to walk solitary henceforward over ragged rocks and salt sterile wildernesses, instead of finding this flower of promise on the threshold of a new year.

You may, perhaps, think that, considering the cool sentiments that possessed him when he sought Lola at Chelsea, if she had sent him quite away, he would not have been very grievously disappointed. I should not like to be sure of that.

Lola had a thousand little piquancies, beauties, novelties, graces, which dawned upon him day by day. Behold, this little volume of feminine human nature, so daintily bound and embellished, of which he thought he knew every page and every line as well as he knew the alphabet, had many chapters in richly illuminated cipher that he could not read at all, to which he was only now discovering the key—chapters that would, maybe, serve him a lifetime to con perfectly.

It is very certain that men love to be entertained; no surer extinguisher of passion, affection, respect, than a yawning boredom. Now,

Cyrus could have danced attendance upon Lola with infinite satisfaction from morning until night if she would have let him, but she would not. He found himself less enthralled on the subject of his own opinions, wishes, sensations, than at any former period of their acquaintance, and could talk of other things beside, though Lola never wearied to hear him on the old theme. Insensibly much of the eager, impetuous generosity of his youth returned to him, and if he was a little exacting still of Lola's thoughts, he repaid her in kind, and she was not disposed to quarrel with that. She did not say any longer, "If he *only* loved me;" for she was sure he did.

Just before they left Hastings for Canterbury, Aunt Manuel said to her, "You and Cyrus are quite friends again?"

"Yes," replied Lola, surprised at this very obvious remark.

"Because, remember you have neither of you vouchsafed me a word of explanation, and I did not choose to interfere."

Lola coloured a little, but she made no reply

then, but that evening, when she was absent from the room in supposed quest of a new song that was mislaid, Cyrus informed the respectable aunt that, when the days of mourning for Uncle Manuel were ended, Lola and he had agreed to cast in their lot together "for better for worse, till death should them part."

VII.

Poetical justice is too pure and simple to fit itself to the complexity of human affairs. How much is there of it in your life or mine, my friend? As much or as little probably as appears in this chronicle of the brothers Hawthorne.

By its code the two heroes of this history should change places. Robert should be blest with a young, lovely, and loving spouse, with troops of friends, with abundant wealth, with every honour and prosperity under the sun; and yet we must leave him in Dorothea Sancton's homely company, without any special treasure of affection or happiness of which we can take

cognizance; we must leave him busy in the varnish manufactory, early and late—leave him to the poor chapel folk, and the institute folk, and the common-place, every-day traffic of middle life—we must leave him doing his duty in the station to which it pleased God to call him, though poetical justice be ever so dissatisfied.

Cyrus should, by rights, drivel away his life in useless remorse for wasted time, missed opportunities, perverted talents, and poor Laury lost and dead through him. He should have for his abiding yokefellow miserable discontent, and for his future a blank. Poetical justice would have served him so, but Providence gives him another chance. Gives him Lola, happy and eager to consecrate herself to him; to love him, hope for him, encourage him, console him. Gives him a fine fortune, friends to spare, good things of life abundantly to enjoy. Gives him by and bye the energy to strive and work with brain and pen, and redeem past follies; gives him some little honour and glory in his day and generation, and lets him plume himself in the idea that he will not be quite forgotten of men when he is dead.

Poetical justice would let Phyllis remain in perpetual widowhood; but as the world goes round she goes with it, and reappears after her mourning as Countess of Clevedon—a distinguished leader in fashionable circles, hereafter mother of gallant sons, mother of Sylvia, beautiful Duchess in the Scottish peerage—a very successful and much admired great lady.

Poetical justice would marry Dorothea Sancton to somebody very excellent, but her guardian angel left her to dress St. Catherine's hair, and breadththen into an exact fac-simile of old-maid Kibblewhite.

And so a truce to poetical justice!

The wedding bells begin to ring, and the curtain falls.

THE END.

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